



FAREWELL, *MY LOVE*

By
Ubada Mir

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Farewell

**Farewell to thee! but not farewell
To all my fondest thoughts of thee:
Within my heart they still shall dwell;
And they shall cheer and comfort me.**

**O, beautiful, and full of grace!
If thou hadst never met mine eye,
I had not dreamed a living face
Could fancied charms so far outvie.**

**If I may ne'er behold again
That form and face so dear to me,
Nor hear thy voice, still would I fain
Preserve, for aye, their memory.**

**That voice, the magic of whose tone
Can wake an echo in my breast,
Creating feelings that, alone,
Can make my tranced spirit blest.**

**That laughing eye, whose sunny beam
My memory would not cherish less; --
And oh, that smile! whose joyous gleam
Nor mortal language can express.**

**Adieu, but let me cherish, still,
The hope with which I cannot part.
Contempt may wound, and coldness chill,
But still it lingers in my heart.**

**And who can tell but Heaven, at last,
May answer all my thousand prayers,
And bid the future pay the past
With joy for anguish, smiles for tears? (Anne Bronte)**

The Princess of Hejaz

The greatest queen who ever lived was known to her people as the Queen of Hejaz.

The Kingdom of Hejaz was a vast dominion encompassing thousands of kilometers, endless valleys of golden sand, oceans of fertile grounds and hundreds of gushing rivers and springs. It was an epitome of cultivated culture, language, and history. The ancient interconnections in the expansive monarchy could be traced back to thousands of years, from the monotheistic democracy of Abraham, to the theocracy of Ishmael to the noble commandments of the Final Apostle. The rich history of this kingdom had been eulogized by poets and dramatized by foreigners and libertarians for many years, but none had been able to come close to the praises and celebration that ensued at the birth of the Princess Royal, the first and only child of the sovereign queen.

This was the monarch who reigned over vast continents, and her realm consisted of more than half of the world's land mass.

The Queen of Hejaz ruled over half the world, including all of Arabia and Persia and North Africa. Her dominion was said to be so vast, that it took days and months for the fastest traveler to move from one part of the kingdom to the other.

The sovereign who reigned over this dominion was unparalleled in regal prosperity and ceremony, and it was her glamor and ancestry that impressed allies and enemies alike. The historical affiliation of this land went back for centuries the subjects and denizens were in awe of the thousand-year-old monarchy. The people always prayed for her honest and faithful heart.

Such unlimited wealth the sovereign had that it was said that the royal caravan that carried the queen and the people of her ministry and her counsels were so long that it started from one country and ended in the other. Each day, tens of thousands of Arabian stallion and horses would surround the wealthy and majestic queen as she and all the men of her Palace would ride in brightly lit golden carriages throughout the kingdom, and tour half the world.

The queen was known far and wide for her piety and justice, and no beggar and no cobbler, no orphan and no widow would ever be treated unjustly in her dominion, and never was anyone turned away from her court, and all were welcome to render their request or complaints at the royal palace, the majestic gates of which never were shut upon the face of her subjects. The Queen of Hejaz never rejected the concerns or complaints from her just and honorable Court. She was the daughter of a king, the sister of a king and she herself had the most beautiful daughter, the Princess Royal, who was destined to the next Queen after her.

Nations from afar considered the wealthy empire to be virtuous and attested that the queen reigned with an egalitarian perspective and had her subjects' best interest in heart.

The queen exuded respect and recognition from locals and foreigners alike. Justice and equality were commonplace in this kingdom, and the sovereign decreed that no man shall belittle another on the account of race and creed, and nor was the strong permitted to accost the weak and neither the men oppress the women. The women were not subordinate to men in the Kingdom of Hejaz, and the local populace greatly revered and loved their queen, and more greatly and with more devotion did they cherish the successor to the throne, the queen's only daughter, and most beautiful princess that ever graced this part of the world.

The sovereign ruled with relative ease and amiability. Her kingdom had never faced the irreversible consequences of civil or rebellious exploitation, and with each year, she strengthened the interconnectedness between her people and the royal family, by making royal visitations to nearby dominions, where the princess royal and herself was cheered and respected by all denizens, young and old.

Juxtaposing the success of her people and her kingdom to nearly realms had always been essential to the queen's national agenda. As they synthesized royalty with the spiritual teachings of faith, the queen became more powerful, and her royal guards obtained more treasures and wealth and offered the riches to the generous sovereign.

Peace had always reigned over the Kingdom of Hejaz. An endless desert surrounded the beautiful castle, an oasis full of dreams, full of mystic shadows and dunes, where the golden landscape exuded such warmth that strangers visiting for the first time felt completely at home. Nothing mesmerized the inhabitants of Hejaz more than the young princess of the land, who was to become their queen one day. Tales of the princess's nobility and modesty was known even by those nomads who roamed freely in the wilderness and storytellers dramatized the legacy of their queen and her heiress in suitable folklores. They lived sheltered in this Kingdom of the Hejaz, miles away from any beastly vexations, unaffected by the desolation of faraway chaotic lands and hostile kingdoms in the adjacent continent.

The utterly beautiful princess was considered gentle of disposition by all those who met her, and her courteous behavior could charm and endear even the most sullen guest. Within the castle walls and outside the city gates, people of this kingdom unabashedly declared that the princess possessed such Grecian grace and Hellenistic beauty that even a timid smile on her lips could brighten the darkest night and her laugh was nourishing enough to turn a stone into flower!

Each morning, the queen would assemble her royal her caravan which consisted of tens of thousands of horses and she and her noble entourage would tour around her capacious kingdom and allow any beggar, any vagrant, any man, any woman and any children to come forth directly and express their wishes, or rend their complaints to her or ask her for a favor and she would grant each and everyone their wishes and mete out

justice to all those around her. Regardless of how well-connected the oppressor was, the Queen of Hejaz would do justice to all equally and hear the grievance of everyone around the world.

Her daughter had grown into a lovely young woman. She was known for her beauty, her piety and her purity across the kingdom. But the Princess Royal's most distinguishing characteristic was that she was extremely shy and very pious. The Queen of Hejaz's only daughter was timid and therefore disliked the crowd of men, and she resented parties or attending the courts of Kings. She abhorred engaging in anything that distracted her from the worship of God.

All day, she would spend fasting and all her night, she would stand in prayer and cry to God and pray for the guidance of all the people of her kingdom and begged her Lord to shower mercy on all the people so that they could stay away from sin and attain the eternal Paradise which she earnestly wished that everyone could enter after their worldly life was over.

Whenever the Princess Royal met anyone, she would plead with them to abandon vice, and exhort them to do justice and righteousness and encouraged them to abstain from all sinful lust and evilness that pollutes the soul and the heart and the mind of man.

The Queen of Hejaz had different aspirations for her only child. The young woman was to become the ruler of Hejaz one day, and the queen wanted her to come to the court to meet the people and learn how to run a kingdom which was so vast and unending. She wanted her daughter to learn how to win wars, how to plan with the generals and how to manage and control the enormous kingdom of her forefathers.

But the Princess Royal felt no inclination to pursue wealth or power.

The princess was overwhelmed with the love of God and her heart was so filled with His love and His friendship and the reality of His promises of the afterlife that the world appeared blank and fake to her.

To the princess, the world seemed to be akin to a mirror in which images appear, but like a dream, it all flits away without a warning. She knew that every single person in her kingdom would have to die one day, and no power or money on earth would be able to delay or prevent the death.

All the nobles in her kingdom, all the vaults of gold and silver, all the riches and comfort of the mansions, all the powerful generals of her army, all the knights in shining armors, all the proud Arabian horses, all the golden carriage and everything she owned seemed to be a distraction to her, a crude nuisance which tried to take her heart and her focus away from her Maker, the One God of Abraham. The crown princess shrank away from human companionship and she wanted to be alone so that her heart could never be distracted from the remembrance of her Creator. She believed all the people of mankind had been sent to this world for the sole purpose of being pious and enjoin righteousness and encourage others to abstain from all sinful acts that destroys them and their family and the people around them and to worship God until it was their turn to leave this painful world and enter the eternal realm of the afterlife and live in the final reality of God and the certainty of the hereafter.

Morning Hymn

**"Oh, Allah, for another night
Of peaceful sleep and rest,
For all the joys of morning light,
Be Thou forever blest.
Here on this new born day we give
Ourselves anew to Thee;
That as Thou wishest we may live,
And what Thou wilt be.
Favour us with Thy blessing, God,
As we this day begin;
Preserve us from all evil, Lord,
And keep us free from sin.
Assist us by Thy mighty power;
Thy helping aid us lend,
To serve Thee from this early hour,
Until the day shall end.
Whate'er we do, great things or small,
Whate'er we speak or think;
Thy glory may we seek in all,
And from no duty shrink.
Merciful God, to Thee we pray
Us to protect and bless,
And keep us by Thy grace alway**

In paths of righteousness."

William Henry Quilliam, May 1893

Luxuries overflowed from the marbled steps of the royal residence and wealth was distributed to all resident with much love and affection, and the queen ensured that none of her subjects ever had to struggle from destitution. There were no cultural and economic constraints to keep them subdued in a beggarly state, but the Princess Royal desired to spend each day worshiping God. Gradually, her heart became more and more in awe at the greatness of her Lord. She saw no happiness in the parties and in the lectures of the people. The princess found no comfort in the luxurious carpets and feasts of her palace. She saw no power in the artistic weapons of her generals. She found no peace in the conquering conquests of her army. She felt no happiness in the praises of her subjects, nor did she find her kingdom and her Palace to be anything but a prison, a gilded fortress which took her heart away from the remembrance of God.

But with every passing day, her heart yearned more and more for the love of God and she wanted to worship and obey God alone! She prayed for solitude, and she searched for a place to go where no man could lay eyes on her, and she could be alone and worship her Lord and pray to Him in the darkest and the deadliest hour of the night and to feel loved by God and to have the Mercy of the Almighty God remove all her pain, all her sadness and all the fear of her hopeful future.

Each night, the crown princess dreamt that she would be able to go to a place of solitude where she could worship God without seeing all the people of the Kingdom or hearing their praises of her. She despised to be observed and watched by those who later spread word throughout the land that the Princess Royal is spending all her nights and days worshipping God.

Her devotion to her Maker was not a thing to be announced. Indeed, it was her prized secret. She was a famous and recognized personality and wherever she went, the people followed her, accosted her, praised her, showered compliments to her and watched her continuously.

With every passing day, the Princess Royal's heart became more and more restless for the solitude and the companionship of God and to get away from the friendship and the indulgence of humans. One day, while she was weeping to God at night and praying for the guidance of all the people of the world and praying for their guidance and beseeching to God so that they would stay away from sinning and be successful in the afterlife, her servants entered her chamber to interrupt her. The maid had come to inform the princess of Hejaz that the kings and princes and emperors of several powerful countries had come to visit and her mother had asked for her company in the Room of the Throne. "Oh, kind maid servant!" The Princess Royal replied. "Tell my mother to let me go and permit me to worship my God for verily, the kings of the world has no worth to me and their power have has no meaning to me and the money that they bring has no value to me and the gold and silver which they hoard are nothing but metal to me and the palaces that they live in are nothing but a stone mountain to me and the glitters of the royal courts

and gems of this world and the pomp and the honor or the prizes which people win are nothing to me. Tell my mother to let me go and worship my God alone for my heart sickens at the site of people who worship other people, who worship money, lust and power and my heart yearns for God, and longs for the solitude and for the conversation and companionship and the true love of God. Oh, my helping servant! My heart is empty inside and it is shattering with terror and pain! I know not in what condition I shall be raised in my hereafter! I know not of my relationship with God! Indeed, this kingdom, this palace, this power gives me no peace; it gives me no happiness; it gives me no fulfillment. Indeed, it fills me with fear and anticipation and makes me afraid that one day it might distract me from the remembrance of my Maker and deprive me from gaining the love of God.”

Months after months passed by, and the years flew away, and the Princess Royal became more and more lovely and becoming.

She became a beautiful young woman, and the queen tried to relentlessly urge her to become acquainted with the governance of the Kingdom of Hejaz, and increasingly reminded her that she was the heir apparent to her dominion.

But with each passing day, the young princess sought to get farther and farther away from the intricacies of the monarchy, and she tried to ride on her pure-bred Arabian horse and gallop away into the sunset, and seek refuge in the darkness of the desert night, where she prayed and supplicated to her Lord. As the wailing of the wind whipped around her, and the midnight storm enveloped the palace gates, the Princess Royal would seek solace in the remembrance of her Creator, and express her love to the One God of Abraham. The

rushing noise of the sea and the beating sound of the wind could not distract her from her worship, and she remained engrossed thus until the break of dawn. But the Queen of Hejaz was a doting mother and she would worry if her daughter was missing from the palace, and royal guards and maids would be sent forth to search the kingdom and find the princess. They guardsmen and shieldmaidens would find the Princess Royal engrossed in devotional solitude and prayers. They would escort her back to the royal residence, and night after night, this trend continued and guardsmen and women espied her often when she was deeply engaged in mediation and rosaries. This disturbed the young worshipper greatly for she greatly desired that her relationship with her Lord should remain a guarded secret known to no one but to God.

To know her palace staff were spying on her evening worship agitated greatly for she longed for solitude with God and nurture the celestial friendship with her Maker.

The kingdom of Hejaz did not appeal to her, for she was aware that nothing was meant to last forever in this dystopian world.

She wished to go far away from the sight of men, and out of the knowledge of the people of this kingdom, and build her relationship with the God of the heavens, who sustains and controls the entire universe and all that is within it.

She wished no mortal could intrude in her solitude with God and no human being would espy or bring her back to the tragic world. The pain of carnage, fear and hate consumed her mind, and she no longer wished to remain chained in this endless bondage.

It was the end of yet another boisterous year.

A royal banquet was prepared and rulers from all over the world were invited to the end-of-year feast. The festival was bright and colorful, with melodious songs being sung by the most celebrated artists.

The Princess Royal was absent from the melee and she had retreated to her secluded prayer space, but her beloved was the chief host of the extravagant affair, and she greeted the scores of kings and emperors, hundreds of ministers and dukes, many noble men and ladies from distant lands and little-known kingdoms. They had graciously arrived to participate at the great festival and mingled and exchanged pleasantries with men of all rank and title, all ethnic and culture, and the powerful leaders of the world brought along their wealth and riches, their golds and silks, as they happily celebrated their royal lifestyles, rejoicing for their good fortune and hereditary rank and prestige.

On occasion of such joy and euphoria, the Queen of Hejaz greatly desired her only daughter to participate in the royal celebration, so she summoned her private aides and ordered them to find the Princess Royal and bring her to the festival stage. However, the palace staff found the young royal engrossed in meditation and prayers and when they asked her to accompany them and participate in the festivities, she burst into tears, and begged for reprieve. The young princess wanted to devote every moment of her life in worship of her Creator and could not bear to be heedless of spirituality even for an instant. The staff could not bring themselves to interrupt her and returned. Once the sovereign heard of her daughter's state, she felt greatly perturbed.

Thousands of nobles and lords and ladies were present in this party and they were awaiting with baited breath, the arrival of her glamorous daughter, whose beauty and charm mesmerized them and whose grace and voice

had already become a legend in the lands. Now, they waited eagerly for a chance to set their eyes on her dazzling face and hear one word from her sweetest voice. Indeed, the queen knew that her daughter's attractiveness was such that those who saw her from afar would weep longingly in silence as she walked by, so enamored and lovestruck were they of her unnatural grace and heart-stopping beauty.

Now, the royals were awaiting with greatest anticipation to see the princess whose unimaginable beauty was well known and admired.

Once more, the noble queen sent her vizier and her relatives to summon her only daughter, but the princess sent all the viziers, family members and servants back and entreated them to beg her mother to forgive her and to overlook her absence. She asked them to render her heartfelt apologies to the Queen of Hejaz and explain that she did not have the stomach to face all the people of the world who were so indulged in luxuries and music of this world that they had become utterly forgetful of their Lord, and so indulged were they into the lust and love of this world, that the princess said she feared that their heedlessness in the sphere of faith and spirituality would seep into her own soul and disrupt her pristine relationship with her God.

The young royal cared little about what others thought of her. Reigning monarchs of other nations arrived at their palace regularly to personally meet and see the famed crown princess, whose beauty and grace had no par, but this world and all its fame could not attract her to its folds.

Begging for her mother's forgiveness, the princess sent word that she was forced to be abstain from indulging in the extravagant banquet, due to her innate dislike for crowds and luxuries, but as the evening closed upon the

vast kingdom, and golden rays of twilight covered the domes of the marble palaces, the young princess felt devastated for not acquiescing to her mother's wishes. She felt she should not have disobeyed her mother once again by avoiding the gathering of the rich and famous. Oh, how many months had it been that she was summoned repeatedly by her mother to attend royal functions and grace wealthy parties, but again and again, she was compelled to refuse, for nothing in this world pleased her or could impart to her aching heart, any trace of joy. Yet, the Princess Royal felt doubly guilty for denying her mother's wishes and hurting her feelings, but alas, she had neither the desire nor the courage to face enormous crowds of people who merely indulged in worldly desires and extravaganzas. Despite their repetitive insistence, the princess could not conjure up the courage to abandon the solitude of God, and leave the noble companionship of His Mercy and Love to dwell amidst the wretched companionship of the people who were woefully negligent and desolately forgetful of their Lord. Truly, it pained her heart to even lay eyes on them, let alone engage with them at a social level.

The Princess Royal feared for the people who were engrossed in obtaining wealth and she wondered if they would indeed die in the state of heedlessness and thoughtlessness and whether they would have to answer for all the sins that they committed in this world. That evening, the princess paced restlessly in her royal quarters, and as she lay on her feather-stuffed velvet pillow, she wondered what she should do. The riches and responsibility of this kingdom was weighing her down and she was pained that this inherited domain was becoming a barrier between her and her Maker. Why indeed should she spend her numbered days

entertaining people who were unwise and unholy, and whose promises were unsubstantiated and untrue?

The love of God was etched in to her frail heart and the pain and suffering she felt as a result of earthly duties caused her to suffer such immense depression that would not be alleviated or cured by anything other than the intense remembrance and of God's glory and love. The name and attributes of the One God of Abraham was her refuge in grief and glory, in pleasure and pain.

There is one God,—One only,—mark !
To Him is all our service due.

Hath He a shape, or hath He none ?
I know not this, nor care to know,
Dwelling in light, to which the sun
Is darkness,—He sees all below,
Himself unseen ! In Him I trust,
He can protect me if He will,
And if this body turn to dust,
He can new life again instil.

I fear not fire, I fear not sword,
All dangers, father, I can dare ;
Alone, I can confront a horde,
For oh ! my God is everywhere ! ”

by Toru Dutt

The next morning, she resolved to make a steadfast decision about her situation, and she entered the palace stable and mounted her thoroughbred Arabian stallion headed to the main courtyard of her residence. The beautiful regal horse began trotting across the paddock and entered the main castle gates, and the princess steered the animal to the center of the palace. In her

mind, she had decided to render a humble request to her mother, a favor no princess of Hejaz ever asked for, from the beginning of the eons till this day.

She gently steered the horse's distinctive head to the marble steps, and it obeyed at once, and moved confidently in a floating trot. A dear friend who was also a princess of a neighboring kingdom noticed her riding her chest-nut Arabian stallion at this odd hour of the morning, and she ran to come near and greet her. As the other princess skipped over the glittering hill, her silken dress flowed behind her and her dainty feet was sinking into the soft golden sand as she ran. She was racing over the white sand and skipped over the flowing dunes, which glittered like crystals under the midday sun, and still ahead of her, the Princess Royal was riding ahead in her stallion. Finally, the younger princess hurried from the inner courtyards, and came to an abrupt halt in front of the royal heiress, and with frantic zeal, she clutched the bridle of the stallion and cried, "Whither do you go, O princess of this land?"

As the younger princess stopped the Princess Royal in her tracks, she saw the forlorn expression on her beautiful face and the sudden realization dawned upon her that this was likely the last time she would see the Hereditary Princess of Hejaz.

The future queen of Hejaz had embarked on a resolute sojourn which she intended to endure alone. Entreating her friend to stop briefly and speak to her, the younger princess of the neighboring country reminded her of their shared camaraderie and entreated her to talk about what was troubling her mind. "Tell me," she cried, "why have you arrived at the Palace courtyard in such a hurry? What ails you, O Princess Royal?"

“I have come to see my noble mother,” the Princess Royal replied. “I hope to beg for her forgiveness and permit me to go on in my own path of righteousness, seeking God’s love alone. I shall explain how living in this world have become too cumbersome for me, and every moment being cloistered within the palaces of this dominion is doubly painful for me for it hinders my spiritual ascension to the door of my Lord, the One Supreme God of Abraham. Such profound is my grief that I am losing my very will and courage to remain among the living.”

The younger princess clutched the girdle of the stallion and petitioned gently. “O Princess Royal of Hejaz! You must not leave us! You must not allow such thoughts to cloud your mind for verily we all have great love and affection for you. You must learn to muster up the strength to survive in this world amidst ordinary men and women for we all need a princess like you to one day become our future queen. Indeed, you must take the reins of this magnificent kingdom after the end of your mother’s rule, and O do not break our heart by forsaking or leaving us!”

“Oh, my friend!” The Princess of Hejaz replied. “I implore you to let me leave this kingdom for this world is nothing but a conduit to pain, misery and sadness. Indeed, this world holds nothing but loneliness. The love of the world and the love of all the people who live in this world is as fleeting as the night that melts into the day, and like the day that rushes into the night.”

She glanced around frantically and then spoke again in a hushed and grieving whisper. “Oh, Princess Royal! Why must you walk away from the kingdom of the world? Why are you walking away from this life of luxury and riches, this palace of power, wealth, honor

and respect? Oh, princess! Have mercy on your mother and have mercy on your friends for indeed we love you greatly! Pray, do not go away! If I only could comprehend what has come over your heart that you have become so agitated and that you feel compelled to shrink away from the companionship of humans?”

The Princess Royal then said, “Oh, friend! This world has broken my heart! The people of this world have devastated my hopes! And now the hate of this world and the hopelessness of this hopeless realm has shattered my feeble heart and my restless soul into pieces which no one but God's generous love can mend. No one except the Merciful Creator can mend my aching heart, who loves me more than my friends, more than my family, more than my parents and more than all the mortals in the world combined! Only the worship and of the One God can give me peace.”

The only child of the Queen of Hejaz paused speaking momentarily and glanced over the golden hills, trying to gauge the depth of her forlorn sorrow. She had been schooled in philosophy, religion and literature, and only the spiritual knowledge of God and His prophets had appealed to her since childhood. She had everything a young woman could ever seek. She had wealth, power and prestige. Her beauty was unequaled and she was radiant with health and prosperity, and yet these boons did not give her joy, for she knew everything she had will be gone one day.

Addressing her younger friend, she tried to explain. “O my friend! Indeed, every love of Earth is as temporary as the people who claim to possess that emotion. There is nothing that the world can offer to me to persuade me to remain amidst the heedless mortals and their false promises. Indeed, too often had man broken my hopes

and no one but God can fix it. Do let me go away from this false harrowing world and let me spend the rest of my days, however short they may be, let me spend every last minute of it worshipping and honoring the One who created me, and grant me the chance to be grateful to the Merciful God of Abraham! Without a doubt, I can attest that in this world, no man's love is real, no human's sentiment is everlasting nor is any joy or happiness in this universe is everlasting. Surely, every love will end, and every happiness will die away, and every friendship will dissolve, and eventually, every close-knit family will disintegrate with the passage of time."

"But our kingdoms are thriving with happiness and bounty! How foolish would it be to leave this behind!"

The crown princess replied. "Oh, my friend! The beauteous life and prosperity will one day transform into conflagrations and famine! I cannot stay here as there is no future for me. Let me go! Allow me to get away from this dreadful world and this arduous life! Let me go and worship that Supreme God who has chosen to guide me amongst the billions of people who walked upon this earth. Indeed, nothing of this world, nothing in this life, nothing inside this Kingdom, nothing of its luxury has any appeal to me because never has it given me a moment of peace, a minute of happiness, or a second of fulfillment."

She paused and glanced at the towering walls of her mother's residence. Indeed, the palace was enormous in every sense because it was unquestionably the largest structure in the entire kingdom. Such great was its height that nearby homes appeared minuscule beside it.

But the princess knew even this sturdy structure would crumble one day.

She continued to speak to her friend.

“Oh, young princess! Let me walk away from the hatred and the tedious life of this world!

Let me walk away from the pain that humans inflict upon others.

Let me get away from the fools who believe in love only to be betrayed by it in the end.

Oh, my friend! Pray let me go away from this heartbreaking world which breaks the heart of everyone who worships it, destroys all those who adores it, and vilifies those who love it, and runs away from those who pursue it! Verily, this world has done nothing but offer bitterness, remorse and heartbreak to all those who chased after it, and worshiped it and fought over it!”

The Princess Royal started to urge her horse to gallop and it went flying once more, making a magnificent round about the courtyard, before slowing to a graceful trot. The Princess Royal’s Arabian stallion galloped into the sunrise, with a long trail of her silken dress flying after her. In the glaze of the morning sun, the rubies and clusters of diamonds embellished on her veil was glittering like the evening stars

Her Arabian horse galloped faster and faster through the Royal gardens and the spacious pathway as her beautiful face shone brilliantly in the reflection of the rising sun and her graceful shadow trailing noiselessly in the sand.

This had been a celebrated land since the Judaic and Roman times, and people whose views ranged all over the spectrum found refuge in the Kingdom of Hejaz.

But the Princess Royal was not engrossed in remembrance of her noble lineage or her vast Kingdom, but only the prospect of her eternal life after death occupied her mind.

The velvet lined silken robe around her nape flowed in the desert breeze while the long veil she had donned was trailing behind her as her stallion picked speed. The powerful animal galloped with pride, as though it knew somehow, that the Princess Royal, the first-in-line to inherit the throne of the Kingdom of Hejaz, which was the most powerful and vastest monarchy in the world, was seated on its back.

The Princess Royal addressed her friend pleasantly as she came to a halt.

“Oh, my friend! Do you see the heavens darken and the clusters of stars which gather every night by the sea? Do hear the creaks of the nightingale when she sings unto the trees?

Do you notice the waxing moon when it shines every night so carelessly?

Do you feel the night sky concealing all the secret of past centuries that flits by?

Do you feel the rain that showers, knowing this very rain had poured on all the billions of creatures who came before us and will rain upon all those who will come here after?”

“Oh, my friend! Are you aware that with every darkening day and every moonless night, I feel the presence of my Lord! With every sunrise and every rainfall, I feel the love of my Lord! With every hurricane and every blast of wind, I feel the power of my God! With every crashing wave and every sweltering volcano, I feel the might of my Lord!

Oh, friend! To me, this life is worthless unless every moment therein is spent in the preparation of the everlasting afterlife! This world is a theater and its

plays are all ending in sheer loss unless it were spent in remembrance of the Lord of for the betterment of man!”

“Oh, how I regret every day that passes by with the setting of the sun, knowing that my life span decreases with each waning and waxing of the moon, and I mourn that my good deed had not significantly increased!” The Princess Royal could not think of any reason why she must live in a land where no wishes came true, and forever would she be destined to mourn all ruined hopes, and remain powerless over her own heart and soul. “Release me! And let free the girdle of my horse for my heart was broken by humans and I found that no love but the love of my Lord is true or lasting! Oh, friend! This world and its people have shattered my faith by false hopes and cruel promises, but in God alone did I find solace!”

The young princess’s unbound wavy hair gleamed in the desert sun, and her beautiful, flawless face glowed as she smiled timidly. “Oh, my friend! All the love that is given to fellow man, and all the energy that is spent on shallow humans of this earth are so utterly mundane, for heedless people are unmitigatedly undeserving. The love offered to mortals is valueless and shall forever be unrequited and unreturned. I found that only the Creator of my soul was worthy of receiving my true love! In His boundless love have I found an eternity of joy and contentment.”

“Oh, let go of the girdle! Do let me go before I lose my soul to the slavery of hate, lust, wealth, pride and anger! Man have broken my heart! My soul has become hopeless in this pain-filled loveless world! Let me go to my God! Release me from the restraints on mortal life

and let me love earnestly the One and Only Being who loveth me when all else turns away! O, let me go and cry unto Him day and night, and pray unto him to cure this shattered and empty heart of mine!”

**With a great sigh, the Princess Royal exclaimed:
“Verily, who else have I beside Him who loves without judgment, forgives without remembering and blesses without counting and loves without ceasing?”**

**“Oh, companion of my childhood! Has not this world and its people hurt you enough?
How much more pain will you take and still turn away from your Lord?**

Have you not realized by now that there is no peace in this life except in the Remembrance of God’s infinite hope?

Have you not realized by now that there is no love in this mortal domain, and there was never any love in this universe but the love of your All-Seeing Omnipotent God, whose bounty is unending, who showers mercy on the undeserving, and whose decrees are unchanging?”

As the Hereditary Princess of Hejaz spoke, she glanced across the vast hills and crystalline sand all around her and marveled at how the landscape of Hejaz was mapped by rich and complex terrain. She knew that only one native to the desert clime could coordinate the expanse unaided, but she was unafraid in her quest to leave the dominion of her mother and venture into an untrodden land, where neither men nor beast shall accost her as she prayed to her Almighty Creator.

“But must you go away?” The younger princess cried out. “Such lovely palace and wealth you shall leave behind!”

“My young friend!” The Princess Royal explained benevolently. “Every meal I eat, every party I attend, every minute I spend in these indulgence is wasting away, and erasing time from my life, until one day I will wake up and there will be no time left in my lifeline and my death will be here, and I, without a second’s notice or warning, in that precise moment, I shall have to leave all my friends and family, let go of all my loved ones, no matter how they cherished me or how eagerly I sought them, and without a moment’s delay, I shall take leave from this transient world and move on to the afterlife to live in the eternal dominion of my Lord. I shall no longer be here after that day, and my corpse may be charred in a desert or fallen deep at sea and may never return to this earth to earn more good deeds, or to impart goodwill or generosity upon others.”

“In truth, my heart burns in an agonizing pain, almost too severe to comprehend, because the time of my death time may be very close and I have done nothing great in my life or in helping humanity nor did I make my Creator proud and pleased with my actions! O I must spend every second and every minute of the remaining days of my life in the remembrance of my Lord and in sincere prayers for the betterment of humanity, lest death come all too suddenly and overpower me, and all the multitudes of nobles and commoners, all the kings and all the subjects who I have spent so much time pleasing will forget all about me the moment my final gasp escapes this mortal breath, and those who shall survive me will bask in merriment while doling out their measly shares of inheritance and earthly power.”
The Hereditary Princess wept in sudden realization that her God was the Supreme Maker of this vast universe and controlled everything in the heavens and the earth.

“How many women and men have passed away before me and went on to their Lord?

How many righteous saints before me had spent their living days worshipping God and obeying the laws of their Creator, and how they lived in assurance of an eternal heaven and how they had loved their Lord, and how the Creator of Adam and Abraham loved them in return!”

The princess spoke more agitatedly. “Oh, how fortunate were those noble hearts! When they prayed, God answered. When they lived, God was pleased with them and when they died, God rewarded them! I must not let myself slip away from the path of the righteous and fall into the deadly trap of this world, whether it is contemptible lust, sordid wealth, derogatory honor, shameful ego, unruly anger, vile power or cold revenge. I must not let the world or its people distract me! Indeed, the devil will celebrate if he can distract me from my Lord but I am afraid! Oh, I am so afraid of losing God’s guidance and slipping into the trap of the Rejected devil, like the million men that fell into tides of tribulations before me!”

Her childhood was pleasant for she loved her parents exceedingly. The princess was schooled in royal etiquettes, and not just the rudiments of royalty, but the intricacies of one day becoming the queen. But in her own wanderings of the mind, the Hereditary Princess of Hejaz had discovered the love of God, and now hoped to gain nearness of the Gentle Deity and attain the loftiest home in Paradise. She wanted nothing more than to get far away from the sin and vanity of this life!

She again turned to face her friend and spoke. “Look at the kings and emperors of yesteryears! See the blood-soaked pages of history, and you shall find how mortal kings of our past killed each other to remain in power for one extra day, and they murdered each other to gain one extra inch of soil of their territory, but they all have been rolled and buried under the same dirt, covered in pieces of the same stone and their once mighty bodies have been reduced into dust. Even the bones of their majestic bodies have been devoured by wild animals, and the last piece of their flesh have been pecked away by angry vultures! Ask yourself, what good has their empires and kingdoms had done for them? What use was their wealth and luxuries and how had it benefited them in death? Indeed, I know the world is futile, and this kingdom of mine, its luxuries, its titles and prestige, its honor and power have no meaning to me and has given me nothing but pain, fear and hate.”

The Princess Royal did not want to remain in the companionship of men who were slaves to falsehood, pride, and sin! “Oh, my friend! Let me go away from the hate of man, from the lovelessness of this world, from the emptiness of this life, and from the fake promises that this world makes to unsuspecting souls, from the provisional glitters of the golds and gems of this world, from the interim power of this world and from the praises of man which often turn to hate and curses and from the love that man claims to adore, but which more often than not, turns into bitter hatred. Indeed, no man's love in this world is real indeed! No human's love and respect in this world is everlasting! Indeed, this world is as false as the gold that lay in the midst of oceans, as the people who live in it, as the food that is devoured in it and as the time that flies away from it!” Saying these words, the Princess Royal begged

forgiveness from her younger friend, who wept most profusely but released her grasp from the stallion's girdle."

With her final words, the Hereditary Princess of Hejaz adjusted her seat on the horseback, and galloped away towards the court of her mother's Palace. The majestic castle walls were built stone by stone. For fifty years, tens of thousands of men worked from dawn till dusk to build the dominating palace, so that the Queen of Hejaz and her daughter could live therein, safe and content, withing the solid marble walls.

With the Queen of Hejaz as her audience, the Princess Royal stood demurely.

Many times, people asked her whether she considered the Queen of Hejaz her mother or her Queen, and the witty reply the young princess tendered was that the Queen of Hejaz was both her mother and queen, and she loved and obeyed her in every aspect of her life.

The sovereign knew her daughter was an incredibly intelligent woman, and she listened with a placid heart as her child spoke.

"Oh, my beloved mother! Pray let me be! Leave me to the love of my Oft-Forgiving Lord for He hath captured my broken heart and mended it with His eternal love! Oh, mother! This world is nothing but a handful of numbered days and when our time comes, we cannot delay our death one moment longer!"

Upon being summoned by the sovereign, the young princess stood meekly at the foot of the throne, paying respects to her mother, the queen.

Her luxuriant hair had been elaborately styled and pinned and she had donned the royal cape over her body before leaving the residence quarters.

“Oh, my angelic mother! My heart yearns for the love of my Exalted Lord, for He hath created my soul and fashioned this mortal frame. And out of the billion people that walks upon His earth, He let me call into Him every night and allows me to remain engrossed in worship. And whenever I supplicate to Him, and wherever I call unto Him, my Maker answers me without delay!”

“Oh, mother! The love and glamor of this world is false! The glory given by humans is false. The honor proffered by people is false and as varying as the night and day and the wealth of this earth is temporary, and more unreliable than the occasional rain over deserts and gold and currencies are more perishable than the dried logs that burns away to give heat until nothing but ashes remain!”

She tried to hold back her gushing tears but failed. “Oh, angelic mother of mine!” The Princess Royal cried. “My heart is weak and my mind sensitive and nothing but the eternal and true love of my Creator can console my breaking and bleeding heart!”

Dearest mother! Know that the Power of my Creator is real! Everything on this earth and everything in the heavens exist and subsist by His supreme command! The Most-Gentle Lord had sent us to this world to test us!

He sent us to this life to see which one of us remains steadfast to His Just laws and which one of us become disobedient, forgetful and go astray!

**Indeed, my creator sent us down to this royal kingdom
to see if the pomp and luxury and the comfort and
honor of our kingdom makes us forgetful of Him and
makes us abandon His less-fortunate creations!**

**Indeed, my Lord tests all in this earthly abode, for
verily, this world is a place of tests!**

He tests the impatient with poverty!

He tests the forgetful with luxury!

He tests the neglectful with strict religious laws.

**He tests the broken-hearted ones with the shallow love
of humans.**

**He tests the weak hearted ones with the praise and
honor of people.**

He tests the proud with dishonor.

He tests the weak bodied ones with lust and rage.

He tests greedy ones with wealth and comfort.

He tests the coward ones with poverty.

He tests the brave ones with insult and injury.

**He tests the family men and women with their loved
ones.**

**He tests everyone with whatever is most valuable to
them.**

**He tests the unsuspecting human with what is
important to them and nearly all fails in this trial, but O
how vital it is for man to remember that this test is real
and earnest! No one but the most pious ones and the
truly good ones can remain steadfast upon God's
exalted path!**

**Oh, mother! I fear lest this forgetful world of coveted
kings and marbled palaces, this life of charming nobles
and princes, and the plethora of cherished love or
generous respect and the riches of gold and rubies will
distract me from the remembrance of my most
honorable loving God. I fear that one day I may fail my**

test and thus, become, in the sight of my Lord, a most ungrateful creation!"

Within the adherence and faith, she perceived clear manifestations of love and truth. The Princess Royal spoke with affection. "Oh, mother of my heart, body and soul! Do not think that my love for you shall falter, for it is my duty to my Lord to love and cherish you and my Most-Forbearing Creator will love me most when I love you most earnestly!"

Mother! If your love for me is real, then let me free! Pray, let me go away from this sinful and forgetful world and spend my days worshipping the God of Abraham and Moses!

Oh, mother! Would not you want your princess to be in the highest position in paradise?

Would not you want your daughter to be the queen of paradise?

Ah, mother, would not you desire that your child become the sovereign queen of all the honorable people who will reside in paradise?

Will you not then let me go away from this dangerously lustful and misguided world?

Can I not go to a place where the love of my Lord will not be tested and I will have no distraction in my worshipping of the God of Abraham, and I will face no obstacles in obeying His commands? Will you not let me hide away from this straying world and spend my youth and entire life worshipping the One to Whom we all must return today, tomorrow or the day after?"

The Queen was the highest-ranking royal in the nation, and she earnestly desired that her only child, her beloved daughter should assume the position on the

throne after her untimely death or a gradual abdication.

**“My child!” She cried. “My sweet baby whom the all the subjects of this kingdom envy!
How can you leave your mother’s love and companionship when my kingdom and my life is all for you?”**

“Oh, mother! Had the young handsome king of so and so kingdom come today, and begged for my hand in marriage, would you not agree to his proposal? Would you hesitate to give me away to a foreign sovereign, or would you rather choose to be most proud to hand me over to the king of the only kingdom that exceeds us in riches and wealth and honor? Would you not then agree to separate with your most beloved daughter because you know that she would indeed be treated most honorably in that kingdom as their queen?”

Oh, my mother! Why then would you not let me leave this tempting world and spend my life loving and crying unto my Lord in hope and fear until my time comes to an end and your Maker, the God of Abraham fulfills His promise and enters me into His most eternal, ever living, unending kingdom of the heavens?

Queen of my heart! Would you not want your daughter to be most revered by God and most honored by Him until we meet again in the eternal kingdom of our Lord, never to depart?

To the princess, the comprehensiveness of her belief was apparent, and she was certain that loving and obeying the One God of Abraham was inherent to human nature, and was her only path to salvation.

Who can ever understand the depth of my distress? Oh, how desperately do I want to go far, far away! I long to go away from the people, away from the wealth and lust and away from love of this world. I must go away from everyone and everything that distracts me from the worship of my Creator, so I can go far away from human reach and express my eternal gratitude unto the Lord who loves and cherishes me. I desire to be alone, with no distraction save myself and my Creator, where my prayers and vigils shall not be interrupted or accosted by any human, so that I can find Him and discover His love again in my heart and my life! I wish to pray undisturbed so that I can find the purpose of my life and worship the One God who is the giver of my breath, the reason of my hope and dreams, and the only reason I can bear the painful existence in this temporary world. I hope to find peace and hope in my prayers and seek solace in worshipping the loving One Honorable God of Abraham.”

The Princess was dressed in a floor-length sheath dress with a wide portrait style collar, wrapped gracefully around her shoulders as she stepped softly over the marble steps of the palace. The dress’s gold satin fabric flowed like a magical liquid over the palace grounds as the princess tread on and she spoke to her mother: “I want to break away from the chains of servitude that depends of power and wealth, that relies on pleasure and comfort, that ends in heartache and fear, and I hope to relieve the heaviness of my injured heart by crying unto the One God who can rescue me from this earthly woe, and grant solace to the restless heart of mine which is still beating within this fragile cage of bones.”

“Oh, how my pain is manifest at the hot droplet of tears! Do angels deliver my notes of grief? Do mentions of my weeping rise up to the supreme? My Creator who knows, hears and sees everything is aware of the anguish that beset my heart with woe!”

**“How I wish to halt this worldly pain and stop my meaningless routine of life!
How I hope to stop the suffering of my aching heart?
How can I delay the chiming of the clocks of life that are ticking for a moment, only to be silenced forever? I must reflect on the purpose of this temporary and useless life and find the path to my final destination. Truly, I hope to run away from this world and hide away from its people.
How earnestly I wish to escape from the dreadful pain this world has inflicted on my sad heart!
I long to leave the amenities of this earth before the time comes when I am forced to depart from here forever!
I hope to seek and find the purpose of my existence, and discover the reason my Lord had sent me here.
By praying and mediating to the One All-Seeing Creator, I hope to comprehend the reality of Heaven, and feel the Divinity of my God, and dwell in His company for my Creator is my only refuge!
Dearest mother! Verily I want to escape this life, but I do not seek to be away from you! I seek not a place where you shall not be able to find me, O mother, but only a place where I can begin to find myself!”**

**Cannot you see, dearest mother, that my heart is restless and my mind is in pain?
Indeed, I will have to leave you one day, O my noble mother, no matter how much you love me or how eagerly I love you, we must all leave this temporary and meaningless world.**

Oh, mother! Nothing is eternal in this ephemeral world. Nothing can give me peace but the prayers I utter to my Lord, as speaking to the Supreme Creator is my only hope.

There is no kingdom left for me as every kingdom on earth shall perish and no kingdom will remain but the kingdom of heaven.

Do you not see, O mother, the miserable outcome of men who fought and killed over wealth and power, just to die in vain, so other men could fight and kill for it too?

Oh, mother! After knowing about the Benevolence of the God of Abraham, and feeling His undying love and learning of unwarranted forgiveness, how could you expect me to be contended with this pain-filled false and temporary world?

Darling mother! I feel death is close! Death is as near to me as it is to someone who will die a century later. We must all awake from this earthly slumber one day, unknowing and unaware that it may be our last day on this desolate earth.

Ah, mother! Time is flying away. The months and years are rushing by and the affixed date of my final day is flying towards me.

Oh, mother! Let me then prepare for that which is eternal and let me leave the kingdom and wealth which beguiles man and confuses my heart and vexes my mind.

Let me be at peace with only my Omnipotent Lord as my companion and let me worship Him unvexed and

unbothered by all squandering earthly things and futile beings, for my Creator loves me and guided me. My feeble and broken heart is not strong enough to love anyone else except my lord, because mankind continually breaks hearts and the Merciful God mends it always!

**Oh, how we cry when loved ones die!
Oh, how we weep when we become ill or our loved ones get afflicted by terminal diseases!
But are not we all terminally ill?
Are not we all going to die on day? And could it be that the death day is not too far away?
Yet, we live on and fight one another over trifle things, as though we were meant to live here in this temporary world forever!
How swiftly we may have to depart this world and visit our Creator, and how ill-prepared we are for the everlasting life in Heaven and how superfluous is our indulgence in which we foolishly quarrel, struggle, kill and love for this brief unprofitable and unpromised life?**

**Centuries have come and gone before us, and centuries will come and be gone after us.
No one remains in this temporary world of pain and vindication, or heartbreak and betrayal.
Only the Almighty God of Abraham remains and those of His creation who loved Him remain steadfast in that love through the tides of time.**

The Princess Royal stood silently before her mother, and bowed her head, before setting her bright eyes on

the tethered animals that were seated by the throne. It was a custom for the rulers of Hejaz to collect the most exotic and beautiful animals from all around the world, and rear and raise it in the palace ground. Hundreds of rare birds and peacocks were kept in welded cages around the queen's throne as a sign of nobility, and scores of exotic and brightly striped golden lions and tigers, and spotted leopards and cheetahs were positioned in metal cages nearby.

The crown princess looked at the fiercest animal that was growling in the cage.

She called out. "Break away, O lion from your cage and come forward in the name of your God, the one God of Abraham and show them the power of your Creator, and your willingness to obey him."

The queen's royal court stood asunder and gasped in shock and awe when the lion sprang to his feet and with a resounding roar, broke free of the cage. The queen and her viziers looked on in disbelief as the lion broke out from his welded metal cage and came forward with his head bowed and stood in front of the princess.

"Do you see, O mother, that I am not afraid of this beast nor should you be afraid of any creation on this world, because if your God is beloved to you as He is beloved to me, he shall hear your prayers. Mother, my Lord listens to my every cry, and answers my every prayer. All of my Lord's creations, including the animals, the wind, the rain and the earth obeys Him and when I order them to obey His command in His majestic name, they listen for they are naught nothing but a creation of my own Creator, my own God for whom I live and die, for Whom I suffer and try, for there is no God worthy of worship besides the God of Abraham , Who is the creator of Adam and Eve and who controls the heaven

and earth and is the Lord and only controller of all things, living and dead. It is for this reason I fear not His slaves or His creations and only fear Him for His wrath is as powerful as His love.”

Uttering these words, the Princess Royal faced the rows of birds that were perching inside heavily welded metal cages, and she ordered, “Oh, birds of this kingdom’s court! Break away from your locked cages in the name of your God and Creator, and come forward and show my mother how your actions are controlled by my Creator, and how you are bound to my Lord and His orders when I invoke His glory.”

No sooner had she completed her entreaty, the birds of the caged fluttered their wings and began to break out of the cages. The rare snow eagle burst out of its heavy cage and sat itself down in front of her mother, making the queen shocked beyond her senses.

It was at this moment that the Queen of Hejaz realized the significance of her daughter’s words! No doubt she was speaking the truth! Her daughter was indeed a true friend of God!”

The misunderstanding and the wedge between the mother and daughter evaporated as the queen understood that her only daughter had become a close friend of the Lord of the universe, and time and space no longer mattered in her life, as the God of Abraham had granted the princess unparalleled power over His kingdom of this world, and command over His entire creation.

The Queen of Hejaz was a kind-hearted woman, but her wisdom was immense, and she realized that she had no right to stop her daughter from pursuing a life of abstinence and worship. She realized that her power was nothing compared to the unlimited power of God, and indeed, she had no say in this matter of whether the

princess should leave the realm of this kingdom. How true it was that her daughter was barely living in this world, and though her frail body existed in the palace, her heart and soul had found God and had loved the Omniscient Creator so fiercely, so passionately and so purely that she had attained a position amongst God's most chosen saint.

The queen gazed lovingly at her daughter and discerned the difference between them, realizing the difference between them was greater than that of earth and the unending heaven. She appreciated the fact that her daughter was living in an alternate world, which did not govern in the same manner as their world. The Princess Royal had drifted from this earthly world, all its wealth, its power, its fame and its love. Now, her daughter sought only the heaven of the One God whose dominion goes to eternity. The crown princess wanted to be a part of the vastness of God's love, the limitlessness of His power and the eternity of His might. Verily, her child loved had found Him and she had gone away from this visible world to a world that controlled all the heavens and earth.

The Princess Royal had become a true saint and friend of God. How stunning it was to see a young child, scarcely above adolescent years, having so much control over the world and all its creation. Her daughter had explained how the creation obeyed her orders for she said nothing and did nothing without the permission of her God.

The woman's heart melted, and she continued to gaze in awe at her pious daughter.

She marveled at the beautiful girl who prayed constantly, and cried unto her Lord, day and night and who God loved so much in return. It gave her great joy

to know her only child, the Hereditary Princess of Hejaz, had become such a noble-hearted pious woman, with a heart so pure, that no thoughts of human ever intruded her mind. Her love for God was so pristine that God loved her back tenfold and made the creation subservient to her! Indeed, this princess had a clean heart which was free from thoughts of sin and blight, or notions of love or lust for man.

Ah, what an astonishing phenomenon! The Queen of Hejaz sat straighter as her heart swelled with pride. It was her very own daughter, her flesh and blood who was blessed with such purity that God had loved her enough to gift her the control of the world and all other creations of God.

Yes, since her infancy, her child was pure-hearted baby, and from the days in her cradle, she never vexed or annoyed any one of her caretakers. She was such a golden-hearted child that from her infancy, she never hurt anyone nor gave them pain or discomfort. Such bright smile she had that royal admirers would often say this princess was an angel from her birth!

The Queen of Hejaz then sighed sharply. “O the pain in my heart! O the fear of losing my child!” She cried out. “O the terror that rips my heart! But indeed, I must accept that my own child has become so close to her Creator that what right have I to bar her from heaven’s glory? I, as a mother, have no right to stand between her and her Lord!

Oh, would to God that she could stay! But we must now say good bye!”

With these words, the queen nodded in a resigned manner, and accepted that her God had given her an angel as a daughter. With renewed pride, she understood that this child had come from her own

body, and had entered the world from her womb. And God had chosen her child to become His coveted friend and a patron of His mercy and a ruler of His creation.

Drying the tears on her cheek, the queen announced, “Daughter, I must bid you goodbye, but I know not how! How does a mother perform the ceremony of departure to her only child who is leaving forever? How can a mother bid farewell and not break her own heart and soul eternally? Oh, the fragile heart of a woman when she holds the last meeting with her child!”

The queen tried to compose herself, but the agonizing thought of separation lingered in her mind. Oh, she thought, would that I could toss my life away to go with her to stay with her but how am I to abandon my people and when I know that her God had loved her more than me?

The Crown Princess often disagreed with trivial aspects of her life, but unquestionably regarded her mother in high esteem, because she knew the Queen of Hejaz had never pretended to possess magisterial authority over her subject’s daily life or secular opinions, and neither did the royal family interfere in the people’s spiritual life.

Right now, all she wanted to do was to seek her mother’s permission to leave the Kingdom of Hejaz permanently. This world and all its luxuries did not suit her. The intricacies of earthly life caused the Princess Royal great anxiety. The queen had made it perfectly clear that as the only child of the sovereign, she was

meant to rule Hejaz one day, and she had to marry and produce an heir who would then continue with the legacy of the Royal Family. It grieved the princess greatly when her mother coerced her to attend royal functions and evening parties every day. The queen wanted her daughter to learn how to rule the nation, and get involved in the politics of power.

It irked the sovereign that the Crown Princess refused to marry in order to secure an heir for the kingdom. In frustration, the young princess once cried out, “But dearest mother! I cannot marry, for I can never love anyone but my Maker and my Lord! My heart is too weak to tolerate human tribulation and their hate and love. There is no difference to me between the hatred and love of mankind for I know very well that most love turns to hate and most hate turns to love! I have no strength to bear the brunt of this painful world!”

The Queen of Hejaz grieved deeply mulling over the Princess Royal’s departure.

The queen clasped her tight in her embrace, willing to keep her back.

The Princess Royal exclaimed, “Oh, mother! If you love me, then would you not want me to become successful in this life and the afterlife?

Dearest mother! Would you hold on to me still and immerse me in this temporary life of fading glitters and short-lived happiness and false hopes of love until I become so broken hearted by the hate of this world that in my sadness, I turn to man and forget my Compassionate Lord?”

“Would you force me to stay in the extravagance of the world where men fight and kill for something as temporary as wealth and power?

Would you, oh mother of mine, force upon me this life of hate and pain when you know very well how incapable I am of tolerating the hate and vengeance of man?”

“Oh, mother! Why do you beseech me to remain in this kingdom? Why force upon me the responsibility of a leadership where I would have to battle foolish, cruel men who worship other men and deify mortal power and the false promises of love and lust?”

“Oh, mother! Why do you give me the responsibility of this monarchy and protecting this country when you know my weak heart is beyond the strength of bearing the attack and violent hatred of men and their jealousy and their greed and anger?”

She was standing respectfully before the queen, her face held high, but there was anxiety all over her made particularly obvious by the trickle of tears on her cheek.

“Oh, mother! Let me go away from this kingdom, far away from this life and from this false and fake dreamlike world!”

“Oh, mother! Free me from the power struggle and the wars that man wages against the each other for their pride, or for their false lovers or their hatred towards faith and God’s heavenly laws!”

“Oh, my child!” The Queen exclaimed, and then gently explained to her child that she was meant to ascend the royal throne, and rule the kingdom with honor and

integrity. “Pray, live a little longer in this luxury! If you must go, then leave this kingdom when you are much older and more mature and have more knowledge about all that transpires in this realm!”

“Oh, mother! Compel me not to ascend the throne, and let those foolish men rule the world! Let them fight senselessly and love madly! Let them believe in the falsity of this deceptive earth! Let them believe in the temporary false love of their lovers! Let them kill and hate over their anger and pride and lust until one day, they discover that their life span had finished! Let them wreak havoc upon each other for this short-lived wealth and temporary power until suddenly the angel of death visits them and they become dust and ashes and their soul witnesses all their false lovers take other lovers and their surviving family members parting away with their wealth and they will see how their Benevolent Lord whom they hated and neglected is now most displeased with them!”

“My angelic golden girl!” The queen uttered with feelings! “Oh, my child! My only child! My successor to this throne and kingdom! Do not make such haste to leave this life! Indeed, you are a mere young woman who has not seen all the beauty and comfort this life has to offer!”

The Crown Princess cared little of what theologians and jurisprudents decreed, for her devotion to her Lord was an act that had spurned from the innermost edifice of the heart, and superseded all other human wishes and desires. What valid excuse had she to cling on to the

mortal kingdom that would crumble to the ground one day? “Oh, my mother!” She exclaimed. “My Compassionate Lord cherishes piety most when the youths of mankind and the young ones have faith in Him! He loves the charity which is given by the destitute and the poor for the one who has dearth of wealth has a lingering fear of poverty in his heart when he parts with his property. The God of Abraham loves the prayers and pious endeavors of the young and robust individuals because despite having no obvious fear of ailment or likelihood of death, they defied all mortal temptations and chose to serve and obey the Most Generous Lord.”

Her pale gold robe flowed in the evening wind as the diamond and silver jewelry on her, as she stood before her mother’s court, begging for permission to give up her future throne. “Oh, my mother!” The Princess Royal cried. “They say love is blind but indeed love is not blind, the blindness of love disappears when a better lover comes along, but indeed it is death who is blind! It sees not the age of the person nor the status nor the riches nor the kingdom of the one whose soul he snatches away without warning!”

Oh, mother! It was my Lord who gave me to you as a vested trust, and it is He Who loves me. It is God alone who may take me away from you without any warning. Oh, mother! Do not grieve over my departure, for we shall verily meet again in heaven, and we will be united, never to depart.

The love of her God was a universal gift and she held steadfast to the primordial truth, and remaining in the

vast kingdom and indulging in its luxuries would be counterproductive to her goal in life, and would hinder her mediation and devotion to her Maker. Thus, the Princess Royal entreated to her mother and sovereign. “Oh, my angelic mother! See how much love you have for me, oh, what enormous love I hold for you, and yet, know that our Lord, the God of Adam, and Abraham loves me more than you could ever be capable of! Why then do you hesitate to let me designate my life away in His heavenly remembrance and remain steadfast under His guidance and care!”

Oh, my sovereign, my guardian and queen! My heart is constantly sad, empty and depressed for I feel lonely and alone in this unloving world and no one but the One God of Adam and Abraham can fulfill my heart’s restless yearnings, and none but my Creator can comfort my unhappy mind.

Oh, mother! So many pious, God-fearing men and women have retained the Almighty’s love and friendship and they have been successful in both this world and the hereafter, and have gone away to a better and brighter afterlife, and I fear to remain engrossed in irrelevant worldly affairs, lest I lag behind! I fear staying in the midst of wealth and comfort, lest this world deludes me and I become broken and enslaved and afraid.

Let me free, darling mother and queen, and allow me seek and earn the love and friendship of my Omnipresent Creator and let my heart be strengthened by His love and piety.

She would abandon the company of those who were nourished by the human desire to be wealthy and famous.

Oh, my princess! The heartthrob of my dominion's kingdom and the beloved idol of our subjects! Will you not stay and grace this royal position for the sake of all the people who love you so ardently? Uttering these words, the queen could not contain her tears.

The princess knelt before her mother, and spoke. "Oh, mother! Let me wipe away your tears for this meager world had never suited me nor was it made for one like me.

The love of man is most temporary and changing. Verily, today, a man may love you but tomorrow he shall love another with thrice that zeal and ardent passion. Today a royal guardsman kills for you but tomorrow he kills you to please another! Today a nobleman may be friends with you but tomorrow, his shall passionately befriend your enemy!

This temporary world and its impermanent people with their fleeting love and their changing loyalty does not appeal to me!

"My heart is too full of sincere love and if I ever pour the sea of my love on idle humans, then surely, they would have broken my heart and destroyed my soul with unrequited anger, unexpected vengeance and unfeeling revenge. This way, the false world would have made me the broken victim of other wavering false lovers! Before the dawn of written or recorded history, human who pursued wealth and honor had to die

unexpectedly and leave vestiges of their glory behind. While pursuing the depreciated and fictional love, and false and impermanent affection of humans, I fear my life span will come to a sudden end and my entire future in the next life will be most unsuccessful, while scores of other pious men and women who spent their lives engrossed in the worship and love of God will be in the highest position in God's eternal paradise, while I suffer waves of disappointment and regret and remorse! Verily, once a person's life comes to an end, his chance of repentance or forgiveness and salvation is closed, and shall never be opened again. All we have is this *one* life to earn whatever we can!"

Oh, mother! I want to spend every second of this short life, every minute of this unstable perishing life in the worship of my Creator and I hope to spend my days and nights in prayers for the salvation and goodness of all of humanity!

Surely, my heart is broken by the pain of this world, which has cut my heart into a million pieces and with every single one of those pieces, I have resolved to love my Creator and try to spend every remaining breath of the counted days of my life in praying for humanity and for the salvation and success of all of mankind.

Oh, mother! The daughter God granted must go away with whatever strength she has left in her broken heart, lest your daughter's frail heart becomes the victim of this treacherous false world, its lust, its fake loves and its slaves!

Cold sweat poured down her forehead, and she tried to speak coherently. "Oh, mother! Indeed, it was your Lord who gave me to you at the advent of my birth and

**it will be my Lord Who will take me away in the end!
So, permit me go to the altar of my Maker, and let me
protect my heart and my body, my soul and my faith by
hiding away from the sin-filled people who have all
become the victim of this false lustful dystopian world,
and have become filled with hatred and vindications
towards fellow man. Truly, I fear if I stay here any
longer, I might become like them. And there is nothing I
fear more in the world than to die in wasteful
tergiversation and sin.”**

**Let me run away from the people of this world before
they trap me in their vicious cycle of the slavery of lust
and the vengeance towards God and hatred towards all
free hearted people who worship Him and follow His
pure laws!”**

**The young princess then said, “Oh, mother! How many
kings had sat upon this throne prior to you, and how
many monarchs will claim this throne after you? What
devious and temporariness this life espouses, and O how
these wealth and power are worthless to me?
Mother of mine! My heart yearns for what is
everlasting and eternal like the love of my God. Verily, I
know that this temporary world and its useless wealth
and this passing life and this changeful humans with
their fluctuating and unpredictable hearts holds no
attraction for me!**

**“Verily, the world has shattered my susceptible but
hopeful heart and has made it wary of unreliable
promises of this earth, and I am wracked with pain and**

hopelessness! Let me cure the agony of my soul, and restore the strength in my heart, and fulfill my spiritual hope with the piety and remembrance of my Creator!" The Princess Royal spoke haltingly, not wishing to cause undue grief to her mother's gentle heart. Which metaphysical doctrine could ever serve as the sole guide to humanity, she wondered. She knew her Creator was True and Just, and He would never mislead, misguide or deceive her! The vast riches of her kingdom were wooing her in vain. But nothing the people around her could say or do to remove the agitation from her heart.

The queen cried out, "But I am afraid, O my child, I am afraid for you!" She raised her proud face in an effort to remain calm, and thought of the time when her daughter was an adolescent, ready to rule this kingdom. The Princess Royal had spent her childhood years preparing for life as the future queen. It was for a life of nobility, power and prestige that she was indubitably destined.

The Princess Royal gave a reassuring nod before speaking. "Why are you afraid, O mother! Who shall I be frightened of in this minuscule world which is swimming like a worn speck within our Milky Way, when the mighty God of this entire universe in none other than my own friend and master? Indeed, He is with me wherever I am! He sees my every thought and He knows my every wish!

Who shall I have to fear when the Creator and Sustainer of this tiny earth is my very own Cherisher and who listens to my every prayer and answers my every fear?"

The Queen of Hejaz sighed. “Oh, my angelic child! Your young heart will break without friends and family, O my child! Surely, your heart will break without love.”

“Indeed, my heart is already broken!” The Princess Royal replied. “I have seen many people die and get incinerated in crematoriums or buried six feet below the earth, to rot and decay alone and reside in the subterranean enclave, lonesome and loveless. I too will die any minute or any second and will be buried six feet below the cold earth where no friends or lover or family will stay with me in the grave. I will be alone there, mother, and since that is the only promised and the only true reality which many naïve people try not to believe in, but I know it is the ruthless truth I know my true address is my grave and not my throne or my palace. Since I will be in my grave alone with only God as my friend, I do not wish to distract myself with anything that is temporal, be it this life, this world, its feeble people or its false lovers.”

The crown princess endeavored to procure some words which would placate her mother’s heart. “Your concern for the state of my heart is commendable and understandable,, she said, “but please understand, that the world has already broken my heart by deluging in with unimaginable fear of pain, loneliness and heartbreak. We all have to die one day! All those I cared about, all my loved ones, they each left me one after the other, until my heart crumbled into madness.

O let me leave now and let God's love take my fear and pain away. Nothing in this world is real, and no one but God is real. No love but His love is real. No relationship but His relationship is ever lasting!"

"When the heavens darken and the grave is dug when the hurricane strikes and when the earth is shaken in violent quakes and when death comes, no one can avoid going to the land of death and visit his Creator, and neither can anyone hide from him and nor can they avoid him. Only at the time of death will people realize how fake the world is. Its love, its wealth, its power, its comforts and its forgetful people are all a fickle thing. Only at the time of death will you realize that only the true friends of God are unafraid. Only those whose heart was fashioned and strengthened with God's love and power can be brazen enough to brave the maddening storms and heartbreaks of this life!"

The queen considered her daughter's words thoughtfully. Monarchy was one of the world's most exclusive society and kings and queens of neighboring empires would often gather in the Kingdom of Hejaz to discuss political and noble aspiration. Foreign rulers had deep respect and admiration for the Queen of Hejaz and they greatly looked forward to the day when the Princess Royal would assume her role at the throne. But it was not to be, for her child had decided to pursue a path of spiritual ascension.

The princess continued to speak. "Oh, mother! If there was no God, then surely, I would have become a mad, raving lunatic, because how indeed can the fragile human heart bear the torment of mortals and shoulder the scorn of men and the hate of enemies and deception of friends?"

“Indeed, how do you expect me to eat gourmet meals knowing I might not live till the end of this very night? How can I awake in the alluring comfort of the palace halls unknowing if I shall remain among the living until the close of the day?”

How do you expect me to cheer and laugh not knowing if my beloved family, my sovereign mother and siblings, relatives and friends will not die tonight and get buried in front of me and leave me in the void forever?

How do you expect me to enjoy my comfortable silken bed and bask in the sunlit Royal chambers when I am not uncertain of whether the bed tonight will be my grave and casket?”

The people of this kingdom were appreciative of their queen’s sense of justice and equality, and they prized the equilibrium between the royal family and the ordinary subjects. However, it was the ardent desire of the monarch that her daughter should take the reign and rule the majestic Hejaz with impunity. The queen addressed her daughter and made another attempt to persuade her, by pointing out how desperately the subjects of Hejaz wished her to ascend the throne.

The Princess Royal smiled tearfully at her mother’s words, and entreated. “Oh mother, how can you tell me to live this lie and enjoy this temporary and counterfeit world?

How could you tell me to find peace and comfort in this provisional life and contemptible world?

How could you tell me to remain strong in this world of hate and uncertainty, and be resolute in the face of heartbreak, pain and fear?

Which entity have I that would comfort me in my darkest days, and who can strengthen my fragile heart but God with His eternal love and hope?"

You know me best, dearest mother. Was not my heart always inherently fragile and weak? How can I conjure the strength to fight and live in a temporary world when I know my time will end and my loved ones will be gone and this transitory world shall have no rapport or importance for me?"

She removed the glittering necklace of braided pearl and rubies around her throat and raised her eyes, returning her treasured possession without reservation.

The Queen of Hejaz replied: "Oh, my daughter! Had not the sun become jealous of me when I gave birth to you? Has not the moon rejoiced when he saw you? Have not I loved you most undyingly and unendingly? Then forget me not when you depart from me, for I cannot keep you away from the God who loves you more than I ever could, and I shall therefore not come between you and your Lord nor would I force you to stay in this sin-filled world where most men fall astray!"

Uttering her commendations, the queen said in a soft voice. "Come near, my darling princess! Come close to me, O pride of my heart and carrier of my legacy. Take this bejeweled necklace which I inherited from my forefathers, all of whom were kings of the sands and kings of the seas! Take this and place it near your heart."

The Princess Royal humbly accepted the necklace, and as per her mother's instructions, she fastened it around her neck.

The Queen of Hejaz beamed with pride and said, "Oh, my heartthrob, my proud lineage and bloodline! Never

take this necklace off and when you look at it, remember your mother who loves you more than all the creatures on earth and heaven could ever imagine! Keep it and never forget it! Never lose it, my child, and never forget the love of your mother!

The crown princess of Hejaz promised to remember her mother, pressed a hand over the pearl necklace with a curved diamond clasp, and prepared to leave the vast kingdom, because she knew her God was the noble Deity who stipulated mankind to observe tolerance even in war, to abstain from food and water periodically even while deluged in affluence, and retain remnants of decency even wretchedness. She knew her future life in the wilderness would be far more productive and successful than a meager existence in the desert kingdom. However, although the princess was eager to leave, the teary farewell from her mother broke her and hearing the queen's parting words, she too burst into tears, and held out both her hands toward her mother and kneeled down! She cried out in a harsh whisper as she could not contain her guilt and said these phrases like a dying person's last word. "Forgive me! Oh, my mother! Forgive your only child although she knows she least deserves it!"

The Queen of Hejaz looked bemused momentarily. "Forgive you, my child? No! Indeed, no mother could be angry at the baby she carried in her womb and gave birth, defying mortal pain and death!"

“Oh, child! Let me turn away now, for I cannot bear to see you walk away from me.

Let me turn around and hide my face! If you must leave, do so soundlessly so that my heart is not haunted with the receding echoes of the footsteps of my heart’s darling!

Oh, my child! Let me close my eyes for I cannot bear to see you leave me! I cannot contain in my memory the last image of my child leaving me and going away!”

So, the Queen of Hejaz sobbed uncontrollably and turned her face away.

She clasped her arms together with whatever besieged strength she could conjure, and she turned not for a long time, weeping in a hurricane of convulsing grief.

Indeed, the queen’s heart had become heavy with the bereavement that felt, as though it would swell and burst her heart away.

The only thought that vexed her mind was her life in the hereafter, her situation after death. She wondered how she would be received in heaven. How shall I fare when the Angel of the Annunciation will announce my final hour and bid me to meet my Lord? Shall I be privileged with the Divine Grace of my Maker? Such thoughts consumed her mind as she prepared for the journey far away from hinterland.

As the Princess Royal headed to her new and uncharted destiny, she descended from the adjacent hill, and guided the Arabian stallion along the serpentine side roads, which was very dark, even blacker than previously, for storm clouds now obscured the path, but the princess went on and on, until she

bypassed the borders of Hejaz and located a spacious wilderness where she halted. It was time for her evening prayers, and the crown princess of Hejaz knelt to pray and remained engrossed in the remembrance of her Lord until the sun rose upon the hill.

The next morning, she noticed caravans passing by the ridge in the valley, and not wishing to be accosted by strangers who would interfere in her prayers, she mounted her stallion and rode until she arrived at the midst of the steppes, where she once more dismounted and became occupied in prayers.

THE EVENING PRAYER

"O Thou who gavest life, who causeth death,
Watch o'er me now I lay me down to sleep;
My body rest, renew, as Thou hast saith
Thou wilt for those who Thy commandments keep!
Let no thought of the morrow cause me pain,
Nor fearsome dreams disturb nocturnal rest;
So health and vigour renew'd I may gain

**To work for Thee as Thou may deem it best;
If be for me that earth no more shall be,
And that the thread of life for me has run,
I bow my head to Thy Divine decree,
And trust my deeds Thy fav'ring glance have won.
Whate'er betides, in peace I lay me down to rest,
Resign'd to fate, because, Allah, Thou knowest best.”**

by William Henry Quilliam

Such was the new life of the Princess Royal, who only a fortnight ago, had hundreds of servants, guardsmen and maids attending to her every need. Now she occasionally rode over the rocky and treacherous mountains and often lived in the impenetrable forests of the coastal regions, where neither humans nor animals accosted her.

When darkness set in, rather than sinking into a deep sleep, the crown princess of Hejaz would stand before the God of Abraham and weep and pray until dawn broke and the birds overhead began to chirp and sing.

The days turned into weeks and the weeks became months, until summer's warmth had fled from the winds, and the chilled winter air began to seep into her fragile bones. The young princess was unaccustomed to the harsh weather of this county and she soon tasted fever and chills for the first time. Living alone in the wilderness, the Princess Royal ignored her discomforts and continued to worship the God of Abraham. She often felt tired but the frenzy in her mind had chased away sleep.

In spite of the fatigue of her body, the princess remained awake all night and prayed to her Maker.

One evening, the rain was pounding and the princess shuddered violently, feeling a sudden chillness spread over her body. She decided it was time to seek a humble lodging where she could remain among other worshippers of God and pray together.

With this thought in mind, she conscientiously yielded to human weakness and began to find her way to a town.

The paleness of poverty was spread over her face, and the once glowing cheeks and gorgeous eyes were now hollow, and the finely permed and brushed hair on her head was quite lusterless.

She crossed the unpaved roads of the impoverished hamlet, and greatly exhausted, rested intermittently by the shade of leafless trees. The small cottage yonder was painted in fresh white powder and looked exquisitely neat with a preened garden surrounding it.

The Princess Royal was so ill and weak, that she decided to seek employment at that house and earn a few coins so to appease her hunger or rest indoors for the night. She had not eaten in days, and her once youthful strength had waned. It was in such a dire state that she arrived at the center of a somber city, where a lone cottage was recessed against a bare landscape. She dragged her tired legs along and arrived at the doorstep, overcome with exhaustion and hunger.

She knocked mildly upon the door and a well-attired elderly woman opened. Behind her stood the inhabitants of that dwelling. Nearly fifty young girls were bustling about, and when the princess inquired in a low and faltering voice if she could live and work here during the winter. She assured the matron that she required no wages, only a place to sleep at night.

The elderly woman beamed with joy, and ushered the Princess Royal in. She began to question the royal about her work experience, and the princess answered truthfully.

“Honorable woman! I am a stranger in these lands, and to tell the truth, I have never worked before, but I am willing to assist you in any way I can.”

“Young lady,” the matron said, “you speak very eloquently for a vagrant! I shall appoint you a teacher in this pious institution so you can administer wise instruction and impart graceful manners to the children. Would that agree with your expectation?”

“Yes, yes,” the Princess Royal murmured.

The matron further inquired if the Princess Royal would agree to be the cook in this house as well. “You see, with fifty children here, we have a lot of chores to be done around the kitchen.”

The crown princess of Hejaz nodded quickly. “Certainly! I shall gladly do all the chores that need to be attended to in the kitchen. Please show me my work place.”

The matron, who did not suspect for a moment that the house guest she was taking in was the most beloved princess of Hejaz, beamed with satisfaction at hiring a young educated woman in her small school and addressing her pupils, she exclaimed: “Girls, it seems God had sent us a gift! Our new houseguest has offered to assist us.”

That very night, the princess assumed her new duties and glanced up at the unclouded sky and praised the God of Abraham for granting her shelter at an educational institution.

Once midnight fell upon the land, she devoted herself in profound prayers and continued to hymn the praise of her God until the sun rose and the pupils awoke.

The next morning, the matron of the school looked bewildered with joy.

“What a miracle!” She cried, waving her hands in earnest, as she gestured to the pupils. “Never did I see a cleaner room!” Passing her hands over the floor, she continued. “I have never seen so much work being done in one night. In all my years, no worker or employee

had been able to dust the entire floor and wash so many dishes in the few hours of the night!”

Then the old woman faced the princess directly and demanded. “Tell me, young lady, how did you manage to do so much work in one night? How did you find the strength or stamina to do the work of ten men? I and my pupils must thank you most heartily!”

The Princess Royal smiled demurely and muttered, “My Lord, who is the God of Abraham, assists me in everything, hence there is no need to express gratitude to me, for it is not inherently my doing.”

The matron said nothing, and the pupils looked on in hushed awe.

The next evening, the matron decided to discover how her new employee managed to do so much work in such a short time, so she ventured to follow her and spy on her as she worked. When night fell upon the cottage, the matron heard the melodious tone of recitation echoing from the kitchen. It was the young employee! Why, instead of retiring to bed like the others, was this youthful employee reading verses of the Final Testament? Curious beyond herself, the matron slowly crossed the corridor and peeked in through the door that was ajar.

Inside, she saw the young woman seated motionless on the ground, engrossed in worship of her Lord. Soft moonbeams were gleaming on the wooden panels and she was oblivious to her surroundings, but a strange phenomenon was taking place. The broom was automatically moving vigorously over the floor, and

dusting away all the debris, while the pot over the stove was stirring itself!

Such horror and shock overcame the matron that she did not want to believe the scene before her to be real! No! She thought. It must be a dream. It cannot be real! Surely in my old age, I am losing my grasp on reality! The girls! Yes, she mused thoughtfully. I shall summon all the pupils down here so they can affirm this scene and confirm what I am seeing is real. It was too bizarre to be true! How could the broom and the dishes be moving without any assistance? How was it possible for this young woman to read the Final Testament so melodiously and all the chores around her was being done automatically?! The glow of the moon was reflecting on the dishes which were moving on its own accord, and spoons and bowls, glasses and plates, and all other utensils were rising from the used heap and in a miraculous way, the dish sponge was scrubbing the dishes without any assistance, as the young woman sat nearby, weeping and reciting the Final Testament from memory.

Believer's Prayer

**“Most honour to the men of prayer,
Whose mosque is in them everywhere!
Who, amid revel's wildest din,
In war's severest discipline,
On rolling deck, in thronged bazaar,
In stranger land, however far,**

However different in their reach
Of thought, in manners, dress, or speech,
Will quietly their carpet spread,
To Mekkeh turn the humble head,
And, as if blind to all around,
And deaf to each distracting sound,
In ritual language God adore,
In spirit to His presence soar,
And, in the pauses of the prayer,
Rest, as if rapt in glory there.”

M. Dods (11 April 1834 – 26 April 1909)

This was the utterly mesmerizing miracle of her new employee, a strange but beautiful young woman who had knocked on her door, attired in tattered garments and possessing no worldly fortune. The matron raced back to the main hall and bade the children and young girls to awake.

“Come quickly!” She cried. “You must see something which no mortal has seen before! You shall witness a miracle of God which was never performed by any saint known to man!”

With these words, she ushered the pupils to the lower landing and instructed them to walk soundlessly and peer into the room in which the new employee was still reading the verses of the Final Testament.

It was way past midnight but still sat the solitary young employee, who was still a stranger and whose origins were unknown, she continued to recite verses of the Final Testament in a melancholy tone and all the pupils witnessed how the dishes were moving automatically and the broom was cleaning the floor vigorously and all the while, the young stranger was preoccupied in her devoted worship to God.

The young pupils could not contain their excitement and began to raise a commotion.

The Princess Royal sensed someone was nearby and her hair stood bristling with alarm. There were shrill murmurs echoing somewhere nearby, but she chose to remain oblivious to all interruptions and continued praying and commune with her God.

In the midst of her recitation of the Final Testament, the Princess Royal again heard several slow and halting steps descending the staircase.

With an involuntary step, she leapt to her feet, gasping as numerous lights flickered at the doorway and glimmered upon the room.

She stopped reading the lines of the Final Testament and immediately, all the miraculous activity that were taking place ceased. The broom stopped moving across the floor. The dishes halted and fell softly in the basin. The stirring ceased inside the boiling pot. There was a

hushed silence as the matron entered the room and faced the utterly alarmed employee.

“I wish you never saw me or heard of me!” The young woman cried. “My relationship with the spiritual realm, and my love for God was a secret that was not to be revealed or known to many mortals. My prayers and devotion were not to be seen by any humans, for verily the secrecy of my religious zeal was a gift given to me by my God and it was a power I had over the rest of the creation!”

“I was thunder struck and shocked, O young employee of mine,” said the matron apologetically. “We were awestruck of your miraculous actions! Pray, tell me why you wished your miracle to be a secret?”

“I hoped to be known to no one except God. Truly, fame is my curse, and the love of people and their respect is my tragedy and the attention of men is the root of all evil. How malevolent is one human’s addiction for another man! Alone, people can thrive forever and is never harmed, but it is from his fellow human beings that all terror in this life comes from.” She paused.

“Alas! Would that I was in a jungle! Would that I never came here! Indeed, the Prophet spoke the truth! Was it not his prophetic narration that soon the best property of a believer will be a flock of sheep he takes to the top of a mountain, or in the valleys of rainfall, fleeing with his religion from tribulations! No chaste men or women would be able to survive except in a jungle because the anger and hatred and envy of fellow man will become so great!”

“It is my guilt and for that I apologize!” Proffered the matron.

“Oh, honorable woman!” The young woman asked pleadingly. “Have you told anyone else about me and my worship of God?”

With eyes downcast, and heart trembling and ready to convulse, the matron confessed to her the whole truth and told her about how she summoned all the pupils to witness the miracle.

Upon hearing those words, the Princess Royal’s eyes became teary. “Oh, woman!” She said, “you have betrayed my piety to men of the world. No wish had I ever, for my status to be known. Have you really exposed me to the world? How could you have injured me such? Verily, my love for my god was to be secret unknown to any soul, living or dead! You have betrayed me unwittingly, O unfortunate one!”

“The folly had been mine alone!” The elderly matron cried out penitently. “What shall you do now, O pious worshipper of Allah?”

“Now, my life has to come to an end for this world can no longer keep me in its breast. I fear humans for they try to destroy creation’s love for their Lord!” The Crown Princess of Hejaz said. “You have rendered me a great injury unknowingly, but my time on this world now must come to an end!”

“O how, how could you have exposed my secret? No human on earth and no seraph in heaven was to learn of my devotion, or was to know of my love for my God!” The princess bewailed. “Say, why have you exposed

me?! Why have you revealed me to the intrusive memory of the people of this world?!”

As the Princess Royal spoke, tears of sorrow filled her eyes, and she recalled the final farewell that passed between herself and her mother. It had been a strenuous time for all, and yet she chose the One God and His eternal Paradise over the kingdom and dominion of the world. Both love for God and hope in His Mercy emerged from the matrix of her heart which was interrelated with the coast of eternity and limitless opportunities of her life. She was the daughter of a queen. She was the princess royal of the Kingdom of Hejaz. Her destiny was to ascend the coveted throne. Her birth was a source of enlightenment for the people of Hejaz, but she wanted nothing from her kingdom, and only hoped to be left alone in solitude where she could earn the mercy of her Lord.

Thus, the young worshipper exclaimed, “Oh, woman! I am afraid of the praise and scorn of human beings, and I had abandoned all wealth and left behind all known people and things in order to make a path in my heart to reach unto the grace of God, and sought the wilderness so that I could be away from the thoughts and knowledge of other humans.” Outside, the full moon floated in the sky in tranquil travesty and the princess cried. “Woe unto me, that my close relationship with my God had been discovered! Whither shall I go?”

“Oh, beautiful maiden! Verily I had not known! Had I known the truth, I would never have said the words I uttered. O find it in your heart to forgive me!” The

matron cried out. “But why do you seek secrecy in your worship, O my young employee?”

“Do you know that it is impossible for people to remain righteous and pious in this world?” The princess explained. “Being in the company of men destroys one’s soul and removes the love of God from the heart. Human beings are a distraction unto fellow human beings. Are you not aware that no pious man or woman is immune from the jealousy and hatred of man, and the world is dangerous place where the sight and ensuing envy of human begins can destroy anyone and anything, so it is better if God takes my life away while I still have faith and while my love for Him and His love for me is still intact.”

With a great sigh, she said, “O how many a pious man or woman have gone astray due to the jealousy of others, even the presence of their family sometimes! Alas! I should never have come here! I should have escaped into a cave or hidden in a jungle where no one would see me. I should have run away from here!”

“Oh, God of Heaven! Forgive me!” Said I, passionate tears flooding my eyes. I was in awe of her piety and my heart was mesmerized by her honor and beauty.

The young pious worshipper of the Most High and Merciful Lord was in distress, and the matron had no wish or desire to let her be gone from her sight, so great was her concern for her. She thought of every possible way she could help her, and so she inquired, “Is there nothing I can do for you, O young girl?”

“No! Indeed, there is nothing! How dreadful is my fate that I have been discovered! Whither shall I go to save

myself and my Faith?” She answered with a sigh. “But do assist me to leave this place before the inquisitorial people of the world should know of me and my devotion to my Lord.”

The matron of the school in which the Princes Royal was employed stepped nervously into the marble hall and addressed the Queen of Hejaz. “Oh, noble Queen! I have come bearing the most grievous news a parent could hear! I have come to tell you that your princess has passed away and went on to the next life and she had bequeathed this piece of jewelry to me, so that I could return them to you and convey her greetings and her apologies to you.”

“How did you come to know my precious child?”

Exclaimed the monarch.

“Indeed, it is my shame to admit this, but I have sworn to only speak the truth in your presence, and I must admit that I had employed your daughter in my school as a common worker in the kitchen, so she could tend to the pupils and assist them in their daily chores.”

“Chores?” Cried the sovereign. “What chores?”

“She worked in the kitchen and cleaned the hearth and swept the floors,” the elderly matron said hastily.

“Oh, old woman! The Queen of Hejaz uttered in the most piteous cry. “Have you really made my daughter, my darling princess, clean the floor of your home?”

“But I can explain,” she uttered desperately.

**The Queen of Hejaz sighed. “Then explain to me what happened! Spare nothing! Tell me everything!”
With a great sigh, the elderly matron began to relate her tale to the Queen.**

The matron began continued narrating her experience to the Queen of Hejaz:

I had employed your daughter and, in my employment, I witnessed her miracle.

When I found out about her miracles, and how all her chores were being done by a miracle, she complained bitterly and resolved to leave.

Uttering these words, the young woman departed from my presence, and I saw her rushing wildly through the streets and heading towards the direction of the sandy shores. I suspected that she was going to get on a boat or a dinghy. This alarmed me, for I knew the water of the sea could become very cold and rough. How would she survive on a boat alone? I swiftly followed the young woman down to the sea, and saw her embarking on a boat.

By the time I arrived at the shore, she was sailing away on a small dilapidated boat.

This section of the Hejaz coast was ideal for the kind of voyage the princess had in mind. As the distance from the suburbs lengthened, the flatland began sloping upward until the road, twisting itself like a snake along the coast, was at least a hundred feet above the sea whose waves lapped leisurely at beaches extending from the base of the rocky elevation. As she departed from the sandy beach, with a great roar, the rain began to pound upon them. In desperation, through clouds of black rain, she rowed.

Intending to pursue her, I waited until there came a favorable wind which enabled me to set sail in pursuit of the helpless young woman who I believed was in mortal danger in the loneliness of the choppy sea water. Frantically, I rowed after her until we had traversed nearly the distance of one day's journey into the midst of the ocean.

The sky overhead began to darken and was soon overcast. The salty wind was picking up speed and a floating sea storm raged onwards, directly towards us!

In the darkness of the night, she could feel the full brunt of the storm and heard distinctly the winds that howled and tore the boat beneath her.

Bolts of thunder and lightning struck my boat and I trembled in pain and fear, and suddenly, I felt myself falling into the icy ocean, and fierce wind whipping and tossing me over the colossal waves.

The graceful young woman was a little further ahead, and I cried out to her for help, and begged her to assist me.

She turned at once, and came to my rescue with great concern. She plunged her hands directly into the raging sea water, and no sooner had her fingers touched the ocean water, the waves quieted and become perfectly still under her touch!

One moment, the storm was raging like a hurricane, and a current was pulling me away deeper into the raging sea, and the next second, the ocean was calm as though there never have been a hurricane in this part of the sea, from the beginning of time. It acted like a miracle under the touch of her noble hands.

I could not fathom how the ocean, which was covered in waves that flung water as high as the mountains and crashed into my boat could calm down and become so serene the second she touched the water! I had never seen a scene more wondrous and miraculous in my life.

The water became perfectly still, and I was able to raise my soaking body from the water and pull myself on her boat, but then my eyes fell on the dark ominous clouds that still swirled overhead. The young woman noticed my agitation, and with a reassuring smile, she raised her beautiful face at the skies and said: “O raging storm! Calm down, by the might of your Lord! O sky! Cease thundering your storms by the might of your Lord!”

No sooner had these words passed the young woman’s lips, I saw the sky clear, and the wind slowing to a standstill and the clouds scattering away, until not a speck of the black cloud could be visible. The sky was pristine and blue as a sparkling pool of crystalline water.

Now, the smooth Atlantic surface reflected the soft sun rays, glowing with the gentle colors of the rainbow. The peaceful water seemed to be inundated with a kind of silent music that calms the weariest hearts.

The young woman made a great effort to comfort me and helped me become dry.

I noticed she was looking frail and exhausted, but her lips were constantly moving in prayers, as she uttered praises and hymns of her Lord. The once livid air was now filled with the bloom of the rainbows, and the surface of the ocean was covered in warm, creative rays!

I, too, had become overwhelmed by the ordeal of this day, and sat at one corner of the boat. The young woman bade me to rest, but first removed an elegant bejeweled necklace from her nape and handed it to me, imploring me to take it to her mother directly should anything happen to her, or if she passed away.

The instructions appeared bizarre to me, but I nodded my approval and agreed to do her bidding.

Then, in a stupor of fatigue, I fell asleep, as the boat rocked gently over the calm sea water.

In my slumber, I heard the young woman raise her voice and supplicate to her Lord in the following words:

“Oh, God of my heart! This love between You, my Lord, and me, was a secret.! No man could know of it, no human or animal should ever have known! Have you exposed me, my Lord? Shall all the men and women of the land come to learn of my clandestine devotion to You?

Shall they all know of my relationship with You?

Will they find out all about my secret thoughts and my heart’s yearnings for heaven and meeting with You?

Have you exposed my secret, O Lord of my soul?

Alas! What part of me earned the misfortune to be discovered by humans!

Oh, Lord! I ran away from humans and escaped from their love and hate!

I fled from the unpeaceful world wherein men fight and die for fickle things, where men kill and murder each other thinking they will live forever!

My Lord! I have studied mountains and the stars which crowned it, and in every corner, I saw beauty of my Creator. I traversed oceans and hiked in forests and saw the glamorous creatures that it contained, and I knew the Maker of such wonders was a Divine being, who excelled in perfection. Oh, Lord of my heart and

soul! I sought to gain nearness to Your Glory! Forgive me, O God of heavens and earth! Forgive me, O Lord, and let me be loved by You even when I am gone from this hateful world!”

“I deserted my palaces! I gave away the keys of my kingdom! I gave away my heart to You! I gave away my soul to You! This was meant to be a secret between my Lord and me.

No human did I want to find out about our divine love. Oh, God of my soul! These tears that I shed in longing and love for You were to be known only to You and none but You!”

“Oh, world! What have I done to be exposed to You? Is my Lord and His friendship with me no longer a secret? Is the Power that he gives me no longer a secret?

Shall men talk of me around the city?

Will humans and their judgment come between my God’s love and me?

Shall I no longer be able to worship my lord in the secrecy of the darkness, devoid of the constraints of time?

Shall I no longer be able to cry unto my lord in the secrecy of the night?

Woe unto me! Has my identity really been exposed as a saint, so that all those in the world can know of my love for my Lord?

Alas! It was not meant to be like this.

Woe to me! It was never meant to be like this!

My devotion was supposed to be a secret between my Lord and me!

Oh, God of my soul! If You should let the people around me know of what lies in this heart of mine, then let me leave their world and call me soon to You!

Verily, I have no wish or dream to live on this man-infested world. I find no peace, my Lord, without the secret prayers of the night and my clandestine love for You which no mortal knew about.

Oh, how can I live when all should know of me?

How can I live a moment longer in this painful world where death stalks me at every turn and humans forget their Creator and remain engrossed in hoarding wealth and killing one another over obtaining more of the useless riches?!

No peace can I ever find in this world of betrayal and heartbreak, O God of mine! My heart is dried and shattered by the anguish I witnessed. My heart is saddened by the pride and hate of men who hold abhorrent lust of gold and power!

Oh, the fleeting world and the brief duration of this life!

Oh, the fighting human against another human! How I wish to escape the mortal domain!

Your love alone gives me peace, O Lord of my soul!

Your love alone gives me happiness in this lonely and loveless world!

I bear witness that no love but Your love is real, and therefore, I turn to You fervently, and my love for You shall be of the epitome heights which no human is to know.

Oh, Lord of my soul! I desire not to be an object of amusement, and I wish not to be a fickle thing that ignorant men will gossip about! Indeed, I fear their judgment! I abhor their praise. I fear the hate of men! I fear their love and emotions, so do take me away from the world of humans and allow me to be near Your grace!

I trust only You, O Lord, to take the pain away from this wrought soul of mine and bless it with Your love and mercy!

She was in awe of the Deity who created all the visible phenomena of nature and who controlled all the invisible workings of the universe. In her devotion to her maker, the Crown Princess of Hejaz decided to abandon her positions, her titles, her royal palaces, and seek refuge in the wilderness, where she could worship her God, in the solitude of the vast plains. She, however, was desperate for her devotion and prayers to remain a secret, unknown to any man or beast.

This sudden change in her austere life alarmed and grieved her, and she supplicated to her Lord once more:

Oh, God of my soul! Be the owner of my heart and let it beat and live and die for you. I beg of You to free me from this painful world for now my secret is no longer a secret.

Have mercy on this heart, which has no more strength in it to fight in order to live this temporary life for such a short time!”

“Oh, God of my soul! Let me cry to You one last time and then let me be free from mankind and this scandalous world of men!

O this heart is Yours, O Lord, and it was always Yours and can never be anyone’s but Yours! But O the madness that encompasses me whenever I observe this gruesome world which is to become my tomb!”

The Princess Royal of Hejaz had denounced the ineffective plutocracy of this kingdom and decided to live as a humble worshipper of God who was not a princess born from regal roots, but of a humble origin. She only desired the eternal Grace and Love of her

Maker, the One God of Abraham. Even as she prayed, she thought about the love her Lord has for her, and she cried out:

O this maddening world with all its people living without purpose, without Your heavenly knowledge, without the hope of an eternal life!

Oh, what has the world to offer to my broken soul? What has this life to offer me but pain and sadness and the fear of an imminent death which shall come without warning and take every living thing away and the world itself shall be destroyed and none but my Lord shall reign.

Why did I brave this turbulent life but to gain Your love, O Supreme and Merciful God of Abraham! Only with Your love can I survive the wrath of this worldly life!

This love of Yours have kept me hopeful in the darkest nights and dreariest day when all men became enemies of one another and kingdoms fought and ransacked for the sake of dishonest love and false wealth but I saw Your love and Your power and Your might, and I noticed death hovering behind mankind, ready to seize their soul away into a nothingness of fear and scorn!

Oh, God of my soul! This heart is wrought with astringent fear and mind is numbed by the thought of humans knowing of my love for You!

Save me from humans, and their harsh world! Oh, God of my broken soul! Save me from the hate and love of humans and call me soon to You!

Save me from the fighting of wealth and power! Protect me from the hatred of those who despise faith! Save me from the scorn and antagonism of those who are slaves of love and lust! Protect me from the slavery of lust and free me from this accursed world!

Free me from this accursed world that deceives all men with allurements, and beguiles some with wealth, some with love, some with hate and some with lust!

My Merciful Lord of the heavens and the earth! The world and all its promises are false to me!

It holds only sadness and depression that makes the wise men mad in fear and hopelessness. There is no happiness for me to look forward to, for every happiness of this world is false, every love is fake, every lover is false, every life shall end and every soul shall forget.

Call me soon to You, O God of my wrecked soul! Hear my cry when I wail at night for fear of this world and fear of my afterlife and be with me in my grave and give me Your companionship in my journey to the next life!

O how the time clicks away and how swiftly the seconds and minutes race away, bringing my death closer and closer to me! Death awaits me!

Come, O death! Take this soul of mine who loved her God earnestly! Take it away from this world! I have no more reason to live for, no more reason to survive this pain filled disagreeable life!

The Princess Royal eagerly awaited death, hoping her demise would come soon. She knew the life in the hereafter would be so serene and beautiful that she would never have to face human fear or pain again. She was aware that the power and regal lifestyle of this

world were mere trivialities that would disappear just as the dust of previous empires had dissipated into nothingness long before she was born.

Death is so near, O my Creator! Hear me now and accept my prayers and save me from the knowledge of humans!

What use is the love and hate of humans when my end comes and my body is buried away and my soul is with my Lord and Master!

All those who are born must die, and I beg of You for a death soon, before the men of this world learn on me and begin to seek me out and search for me!

Oh, God of this universe! My love for You was a secret, a thing no soul should have known. My love for You and Your love for me never did I want any humans to know.

God's Will

I have no wish, oh Allah, but Thy will;

I have no chart but Thy unerring word

Which in the cave the Holy Prophet heard

That blessed night upon bleak Hira's hill.

**I trust in Thee, I wait in patience still
For the reward for all that I have wrought,
For good deeds done, for battles grimly fought
'Gainst passion's might and all the hosts of ill.**

**My inmost heart, my very thoughts are known;
There is no secret hidden, unconfess'd,
For Thou dost search, Oh Allah , every breast,
That power is Thine, and only Thine alone.
So let me live, Oh God, so let my life be passed,
That when I die, I rest with Thee at last."
William Henry Quilliam, 1904**

**This power You gave me when You made the world
subservient to my commands was a secret no soul
should have known and no eyes should have seen.
But I am exposed, and who is there in this world who
can surpass the love I have for my lord?
Who can equal the love of a woman who had witnessed
the madness of this world and felt its pain, hatred,
ridicule, and saw its killing, tortures, and illicitness, and
had found refuge with the One God of Abraham?**

“Oh, God of Abraham! Oh, the Lord and Creator of the seven heavens and earth! Take me to you before the humans of this world draws a wedge between my love and You!

Oh, God of my soul! Let this life of mines become yours before the men whom the world has broken, and misguided, deviated and deceived should know of my love for You and Your love for me!

O, call me soon to You, O Lord of my soul, and take this life which always belonged to You!

Keep my heart in Your Paradise, and let my soul be safe with You, so no man or beast can know of my clandestine worship or my compelling life or my enigmatic death.”

She knew she must follow the noble impulses of her soul. Nothing in this realm happened in isolation, and the cycles of day and night, the enigma of life and death were all phenomena of the One God Abraham.

She prayed directly to her Lord. “O Omnipresent and All-Hearing God of Moses and Adam! Let no human come between us, or try to interfere between my love for You and Your love for me.”

“Guide the people of this earth, O God of mine! Guide them and let them know of Your boundless love and let them not chase after the love of false and disloyal lovers who will love them today, but will love their enemies tomorrow and try to destroy them. Let these men and women discover the beauty of Your love and become pure hearted and forget about the hate and love of this world and its people.”

“Oh, owner of my soul! Forgive me and love me and let the day I meet with you linger no farther and bring it close to me!

Oh, how happy is the fate of one who abandoned worldly pleasures, and who is sincerely faithful and blest! How sweet a life it would be to live with such heavenly glories!

Over the horizon, the gale had abated, and the young damsel continued to entreat in a loving voice. The wind had lulled and the only sound resonating around was the soft whistle of the Western Wind. Death was awaiting them! Oh, what condition were they in! Little did this frail traveler know that when she set out in the early part of the day, in all the gaiety of health and strength of youthful vigor, that she would be met face to face with a melancholy fate, condemned to a prolonged period of suffering, and endure a horrible termination of her earthly existence.

The certainty of death was clear in her mind. What her feelings were at that time, she could scarcely describe!"

The Princess Royal once more uttered several heartfelt prayers.

"Oh, world! You have nothing to offer to me!

Oh, world! have no love for your wealth!

Oh, world! I found no happiness in your fame or power.

Oh, world! Everything you have will end very soon and all those men who fight fiercely for wealth and to obtain or please their lovers will die and lay rotting tomorrow while their beloved one will find new lovers and their wealth will be seized by the hands of their enemies and their children will forget about even their existence and those you deceived, swindled and fought will have no one but God as their companion!

Deceive everyone else, O world, but I have seen your fallibility of your wealth and I have seen the its

temporariness and I have seen the short duration of your honor!

Verily, I have witnessed the uselessness of your wealth. I have seen the falseness of the lovers of this world and witnessed their changing loyalty and hateful blemished hearts.

Nothing you have to offer me, O world, and no luxury of this earth can tempt me!

The extreme storm surge threatened to flood away their boat, but the young woman continued to speak with her Maker: “I have found my Lord and I shall return to Him, and go far away from this painful world of fighting and hating and killing.”

As the storm raged around her, the gull of the gale vanished and the birds in the clouds fled, and only the young worshipper of God and her travelling companion remained. The frightening waves towered above them as the young woman prayed earnestly to her Maker with the following words:

O Almighty, Omniscient Lord of Adam and Abraham! Firmly root us on the pedestal of Faith and support us in our trials and subjugate to us this sea of tribulations as You subjugated the Sea to Moses, and as You subjugated the fire to Abraham and as You subjugated the mountains and the iron to David and as You subjugated the wind and the demons and spirits to Solomon, and subjugate to us every sea of Yours on the Earth, in the Skies, the Dominions and the Heavenly Realm, and the Sea of this world and the Sea of the World to come. And subjugate to us everything!

O You in Whose Hand is the dominion over everything! Aid us, for You are the best of those who aid. And open for us our way, for You are the best of those who open. And forgive us our excesses, for You are the best of Forgivers. And have mercy upon us, for You are the best of those who Show Mercy. And provide for us, for You are the best of Providers. And protect us as You are the best of Protectors. And guide and deliver us from the people of Oppression.

Oh, Most High! Oh, Exalted! Grant us a fair wind according to Your Knowledge and waft it upon us from the Treasures of Your infinite Mercy. Carry us by the conveyance of Your Generosity with Peace in our lives in this world and in the world to come as verily over all things You have power. (Final Testament 3:26)

Oh, God of Abraham! Make easy for us our situations and grant respite to our souls and rest for our hearts and our bodies, and shower peace and well-being in our spiritual and worldly lives and be to us our Companion in our journey and the Guardian of our family. Efface the faces of our enemy. Freeze them in their places so that they are unable to go or to come against us.

Oh, Gentle! Oh, All Knowing God! You are my Sustainer and Your knowledge is my sufficiency, how excellent a Sustainer is my Sustainer; how excellent a Sufficer is my Sufficer. You aid whom You choose, and You are the All-Powerful, the Most Merciful. We ask of Your Protection in our movements and our stillness, in our words and our desires, and our thoughts; from the suspicions and the doubts and the illusions that veil our hearts from the perception of the unseen.”

Upon finishing the prayer, she added this statement:

“I shall leave this world, and go to my Maker, and I shall live with my Allah till the end of eternity.”

Her soft words had struck like an arrow in my heart and I fought to stop myself from weeping.

“Oh, beautiful one!” I entreated. “Why do you speak of death so reassuringly?”

With a glowing voice, she said, “Verily, death is my only escape from this painful world, so let me go to my Lord!

The young woman exhorted to me softly again. “Oh, honorable woman! Let my mother know of my death and bury me in the name of my God! Mourn me not for I shall be with my God, the master of my heart the owner of my life! No one but He had I ever to sustain me, and no one but He have I now to comfort me, so let me go to my God and soothe the heart of my mourning mother and give her suitable counseling to lessen her grief.”

She handed her over a bracelet that was lying at her feet. It took me but a moment to recognize that jewelry. Undoubtedly, the regalia carved on it was plain and obvious. That treasure belonged to none other than the queen of our entire peninsula.

The ailing young woman strained to speak in her pained voice, and implored, “Take this bracelet to my mother, and beg of my mother to forgive me for I have hurt her heart but let her know my heart was too broken to bear this life and live any longer in this cruel world! Oh, do let my mother know my words and ensure it that she receives these jewels.

Oh, honest friend! Soothe the heart of my mother for I fear for her very life, lest she should mourn me too deeply!”

The pious woman said in earnest: “Beg her for forgiveness from me! for it was my wish never to have hurt her! Oh, let her know that indeed I loved her, for who could love a mother more than her own blood daughter!”

Verily, my heart is breaking, O friend, so give me your promise that you shall calm the heart of my mother and do not delay to relay to her the news of my demise!

“Indeed, I shall obey your wishes, O pious woman!” I cried reassuringly. “But how shall I console your noble mother?”

The noble worshipper replied. “Tell her I am not truly dead, and that I am but a mortal body with an immortal soul, who have flown away from the constricted cage of this world and will move on to the afterlife and that this end is not forever. Tell my mother that we shall meet again soon, in a better place, where we shall be united to part no more! Dry her tears, O kind stranger, because verily my mother has a heart which is too soft and fragile to survive the calamitous events of this world. She is too sensitive for the pain of this earthly realm.

Oh, friend! Promise to soothe her heart when you bring to her the news of my eternal departure for she might not be able to bear the fatal thought of the daughter she bore in her womb to be buried and gone away from her forever! Comfort her with the assurance that are recited in the words of God, and let her know the without a doubt, we shall meet again. Encourage her not to grieve because this life is but for a few days and

that today or tomorrow, we all must die and we all must leave the counterfeit existence here!”

Then she lowered her voice, and gazed into the distance, weeping softly and said: “Oh, my mother! Forgive your daughter! Forgive her for leaving you behind! Forgive her for not having the strength to live on! Oh, mother! It is not your fault that I am leaving prematurely from this overcast world! It is only my own mistake from which I suffer, because the knowledge of men who know of me now are too great and I do not wish to be accosted by them as a healer or a saint, for I am nothing but a vessel in which beats a heart that loves her God! My gullible heart is suffering from the knowledge of people! But O mother, forgive your daughter and grieve not, for verily, if you mourn me, then I too shall mourn and weep for you!”

I fingered the medallion which the pious young woman handed to me, and I was surprised to see familiar markings on it. I recognized the jewelry and then glancing at the ailing woman’s face, I almost recognized her from the famous painting of the royal family!

**Thousands of questions raced in my mind.
Could it be that she was somehow related to the royal woman?
Could it be that the woman seated before me had the blood of nobility in her?
Thinking of the possibility, my heart became restless and I started shaking with fear and awe.**

Seeing her condition, and noticing her destitution, poverty and penniless state, and how she appeared more distressed than the poorest pauper on earth, and

realizing that she had forsaken all wealth and honor and fame to gain and earn the pristine and eternal love of her Creator, the One God of Abraham, and knowing that she had undertaken this spiritual journey alone in this wilderness, I was unable to control my tears.

“Oh, princess!” I cried out beseechingly. “Tell me what to do! Advise me on what I can do for you! Verily, I beg your pardon and seek sincere forgiveness because if only had I known who you were, and if only I was aware of the noble lineage you carry in your veins, then I would never have done what I had done!”

“O how wrong of me it was!” I said, still in a state of weeping.

“Dry your tears, O sad one, for I am happy to be leaving this mediocre world and yearning joyfully to meet with my God!”

For the princess, the vintage sojourn to her salvation was ending, and she tried to utter several soft verses of prayer, but found it strenuous to speak as she was prostrated by fever.

The young worshipper fainted one for a long stretch of time and remained intermittently unconscious for the majority of the journey’s duration.

When she regained her senses, she again beseeched to her Lord for mercy and forgiveness.

I was silent and held back my tears.

Then gazing at me, the noble youth said, "I am thankful to you."

Soon after, she said to me: "Lay my body anywhere, and do not let the care of it be a trouble to you at all. Only this I ask: that you will visit my esteemed mother and soothe her grieving heart by informing her of what had transpired."

She was breathing laboriously, her words heavy with pain.

Then the young girl pressed a bejeweled pendant into my hands and said, "Give this to my mother, and beg her to forgive me."

As she said these words, tears overflowed from her sparkling and soulful eyes, and seeing her tearful state, I too began to weep with her.

The pendant was marked with royal inscription and engravings of the nobility! I stared at her in horror and gaped in disbelief. A royalty lay before me! She was a nobility and heiress to a kingdom that ruled half the world? Could it be that she was the inheritor of so much wealth and yet she abandoned all luxuries in order to gain nearness to the love mercy of her Maker?

O what a sight it was! What a memory! What a life had I witnessed!

My heart had lost control over my body.

My mind was deluged with fear and pain.

As I sank to the floor, unable to hide my feelings, she had prepared to depart this world!

Her pitiable condition brought tears in my eyes. How beautiful the girl was and yet was wrapped in a worn rag, but every vein in her heart was overtaken by the love of her God who had given her portion of His Power over all His kingdom.

I was stunned to witness how she lay there dying with happiness and in anticipation to meet her Everlasting Lord.

I could no longer stop my tears. I wept like a child, feeling tremendous pity for her. From my earliest years on earth, I had never experienced such sadness and terror. I did not understand why such terrible calamity was set upon me.

Rejoicing in her faith, she praised God's name and continued to pray in earnest. "Oh, lord of my soul! Soothe my beating heart with Your love and be with me till the end of ends!"

Saying these words, she looked up towards the heavens and smiled with such warmth, it was as though her smile enlightened her entire face. She resolutely bore witness to the oneness of God, and closed her eyes forever.

For a brief moment, I cried for her and then thinking of her family, I began to cry for her mother.

Her lifeless body lay before me, as I wept for her sorrowful and lonely end. I was dumb in my grief, and did not know what to say over the body of this pious woman. Oh, princess! What have you done to me? What colossal responsibility have befallen me!

It was a long time afterwards that I realized that I must bury her.

Ah, what dreadful terror coursed through me that night, only my All-seeing Lord would know.

My poor heart was in deep pain, and atrocious guilt had made me numb.

I had caused this abominable trepidation! I had caused this calamity to befall her, thought I most bitterly! Had it not been for my curiosity, the princess would still be alive.

What a dreadful prospect! I was alone in the middle of the vast Atlantic Ocean, a solitary mourner beside the body of a noble worshiper of God, whose value and position were lofty. I knew her worth. I knew she was a friend of the God of the heavens and the earth. But O what was I to do in this dire situation!

I stemmed my unshed tears and prayed to the God of Abraham to show me a sign.

What options lay before me? Could I turn back, and head back to the shore? Nay! We had traveled too far away! It had been a tedious journey of a fortnight. Perhaps more. Rowing this feeble boat back to the barren shore was an impossible chimera.

Oh, I did not have the heart to drop her pious body into the vast ruthless ocean and see her become the feed of sharks and whales.

What tremulous emotions wracked my being, as I prayed most earnestly. For her sake who loved You, O God, show me a way, for this deceased youth was a lover of Yours, O God of heavens, and to You belongs her body and to You has her soul gone.

Suddenly, I stared above in unconditional terror. I stared in fright at a scene no human before me had to witness! Verily, I saw the waves of the Atlantic surround me in an overwhelming circular canopy. The wind whipped around me and it got stronger and louder.

This is the end, I thought! Oh, this must be the death tide of a deadly sea-hurricane or a tsunami.

Indeed, this wave shall crush me, and it shall be my pitiful end too, I thought frantically.

I could not believe my own eyes.

I saw the water move around me, churning like a tempest in a fierce bowl, and then the canopy of gray waves swished over us, and encompassed the boat in a frightening manner, before the water on either side began to ebb away, as though a magnetic force was pulling the fibers of water away.

Wave after wave separated, and slowly, the water parted, and I felt the boat sinking in the void, deeper into the sea, nearing the ocean floor most gently.

What a phenomenon! I maddening fear, I even forgot the phrases of all my prayers.

I cried like a mad woman, and I thought that if the giant wave returned and fell upon this small boat, then I would be forever lost and this vessel would be drowned deep under the violent waves.

But the waves grew larger and larger, and due to the acute fear of being smothered to death by the pitiless waves, I could not make myself take eyes off the adjacent tide.

Even as my fear increased, there was an eerie calmness around, and I felt a protective force surrounding me. The water of the ocean seemed to part further and further, and when I glanced around, I noticed that the water had flowed away, and was out of sight.

The small boat went lower and lower and suddenly, after a long while, I felt the boat coming to a halt. There was no movement anywhere. The water of the ocean was gone. Our vessel had landed on a soft ground.

I looked down and saw the ocean bed directly below, and all the water of the ocean were out of reach and nearly out of sight. The wall of water around me looked surreal, as though it was suspended in midair, waiting and inactive. The world was strangely still, and there was no sound anywhere. The gulls were silent, the fishes were quiet, the waves were gone, and the water was suspended.

What a sight! My blood was frozen in my veins. I wanted to shout and express my alarm, but the sound had died in my throat. Indeed, not even a whisper would pass my lips.

At a short distance, I noticed glittering fauna and flora. In my shock, I recognized the coral reef that could only be seen in the bottom of the sea. With horror, I realized

that this must be the ocean floor. Never before had I seen the true beauty of the underwater world. Rock flowers covered the hilly areas, and they were of beautiful and delicate shades of purple and blue, and were crowned with pearly shells. The pearl banks of the corals stretched for miles, and the area around the boat was clear of water and shone like sand.

I glanced up and from this depth, I could clearly see the storm-tossed clouds swaying menacingly in the sky above. It seemed surreal that I was indeed standing in the bottom of the sea. How fantastically unique the sea bed was!

I disembarked from the boat and stood in awe at a place no human had set foot before. I then appreciated the power of the Almighty God of Abraham and I realized that God was close. I marveled at how beautiful the natural wonders of the ocean were.

They arrived at the beach, and studied the surroundings. It was undoubtedly one of the finest sea side resort of this kingdom. Merchants considered it to be the most beautiful harbors in the world.

My Merciful God and her Omnipresent God had removed the Ocean and made this boat reach the ocean floor so I could bury her.

My heart shook violently but I mustered courage, and carried her body from the boat and unbecomingly, cried hysterically to my Lord. Fear had enveloped my senses, and sorrow filled my heart as I stared cautiously at the wall of water suspended ahead of me, that had parted to allow our boat to reach the ocean floor.

Then a profound understanding impressed upon my heart. It was God's will that I should bury this saintly woman.

The ominous walls of water of the ocean were standing like a gate, surrounding me while transported the body to a brief distance and began to dig a grave in the soft earth of the ocean bed, using the oar.

I recited special prayers for the dead and completed the rituals for her funeral prayers.

Fear overpowered me whenever I stole a glance at the towering water waves suspended in the air, and bursts of terror drove me to the brink of madness, and I could not fathom what I was doing or what I was trying to say!

Oh, Lord of the universe! I cried out. Glory to You, O Supreme Owner of the vast world and controller of the ocean waves who had removed the ocean water for His friend to be buried!

Oh, God of heavens whose power no mortal knows! No human can imagine the greatness of Your power! No mortal imagination can fathom the majesty of the God of Abraham!

Oh, controller of the Atlantic! Indeed, she was Your beloved friend and You have taken upon Yourself to pave a noble way for her burial so glory be to You alone, O Merciful God of Abraham and have mercy on my terrified soul.

Oh, was there any other human who knew of my Lord's unparallel power! Had they known that my Creator could set asunder the ocean and pave a place under the roaring sea for His beloved friend's burial!

**Standing vigil over her body, I wept and called out:
Oh, successful one, glad tiding to you!
O beautiful one! The royalty in the world and the
royalty in the afterlife!**

**O noble soul, and beloved to all of mankind, and
beloved to the God of the universe! Blessed are you, O
lucky one, for your God had dearly loved you!**

**I continued to speak. Who indeed should care about the
brief numbered years that are spent on earth? Who
should ever care about the brief days in this world?
Why should one care about the opinions of men, who
are made from dried clay, when your God is the Owner
of the heaven and the earth and controller of the
Atlantic and Pacific oceans!**

**Oh, Lord of her soul! Have mercy on all those who
suffer in this life! Have mercy, O God of the oceans and
fashioner of the universe and the creator of life and
death! Have mercy upon me, O Most Powerful and
Most Merciful, for my heart is bursting in pain and
fear!**

**I bear witness of the Lordship of the One God of Adam
and I bear witness to Your existence for who has the
power to control the ocean waves but You, my Lord?
Who else but You can control the movements of the
clouds and the churning of the waves?**

**As I lay her body on the sea-bed, I cried and glanced at
her lovely face for the last time.**

Oh, honorable princess of the world! Your God has loved you!

Oh, honorable maiden! Rejoice for your glorious station in heaven, for your God has removed the entire ocean just to bury you!

Oh, beautiful girl! Your Lord has loved you even more than you loved Him! His Power is manifest in your departure!

Oh, lucky one! Whose love do you need when the most powerful Lord of the universe is your beloved and at your service and places the entirety of His creation at your beck and call!

Oh, honored be your departure and honored be your afterlife! No fear is there for you, oh successful one! No pain of unrequited love, no pain of fear, no pain of heartbreak shall vex you in the gardens of Eden, for you are a beloved worshipper of God! Who else do you need when you have found the love of your God?

“Blessed was your ending, O noble heart! Blessed be your Hereafter!”

“May the Lord of Abraham have mercy on your revered soul! I attest that there is no power but the power of my God!

I bear witness that there is no strength except the strength of your God!

There is no life but the life of the afterlife!

There is no love but the Love of God!

Nor is there any reality in life except the reality of God!”

“There is no power but the power of the Almighty God who controls the stars, commands the skies, the mountains and the oceans! How weak the ill-advised man is, and how strong he thinks himself to be! How fake is the love of this world and the lovers of this life, and how fatuous are there love and loyalty! How changing are human sentiments and how hateful can they become in an instant! O how short term the feelings of this world are! Blessed be her soul, for she took God as her friend and He was there for her in this world and in the next!

Truly, there is no life but the life of the eternal hereafter life!

How contrived is the life of this world!

How false the people and their sentiments are!

How unreal are the powers of this world!

How artificial are the laws!

How deceptive the governments!

How false the wars and fighting!

Only God is real and the temporary life and the inevitable death are but a dream that takes you to God for eternity!

I piled small fistful of soft soil and lay it over her blessed body, and said:

“Take her. O ocean floor, for today lay amongst you a most honored guest of God!

Today, sleeps under you the most honored and beloved of God!

Honor her body and witness the manifest power of her God when He controls the ocean tides and holds back its mountainous waves for the burial of His saint!

Woe to me that I was the cause for her to leave this world!

Oh, would to God that I would never find out about her powers and miracles!

Oh, if only I had no clue about her miraculous and spiritual relationship with God and if only I had never witnessed the power she held over the universe!

But alas, I had the curiosity of a woman! I had found out her secret and exposed her sainthood to the undeserving men of the world!

For this. No more reason did she see to live on in this meretricious world where men fought and killed to become the owner of wealth for the duration of a handful of days!

Blessed be you, O saint, were that we would be lucky to have you amongst us for a few more days!

Alas, O world! A saint has left your earth and moved on to her heaven!

**Mourn along with me, O the waves of Atlantic Ocean!
Grieve with me because such a close friend of God and such a powerful woman is gone from our world forever!
She had returned to her Lord and Maker who loved her even more than she loved Him!**

With a tremulous sigh, I cried out: Glorified are the lovers of God! How powerful they are! How merciful their souls are! How much love do they contain in their hearts for their God and Maker!

I slowly covered her noble body with fresh soil, and with a bowed head, I traipsed back to the boat, uttering softly the following prayer. Oh, Lord, our God and Maker! Whose will it be that all mortal must taste death. Enrich her with Your love. Prosper her soul with heavenly light in the Paradise, where there shall be no fears and no darkness, only beautiful beginnings and brighter hopes for eternity.

No sooner did I step into the vessel, I saw the waves descending inch by inch, and the water began to flow like a stream all around me, and the accumulating sea water covered the ground, and floated the boat. The increasing force of the ocean water thrust my boat upwards, until it rose completely from the ocean floor, and floated to the surface of the ocean in one mighty sweep.

I shouted into the void:

“Oh, ocean! had I known that you also are controlled entirely by your God!

Oh, ocean water! How powerful is the God who controls you!

Oh, how I wept all the way back to the shore, staring back at the place in the ocean beneath which she lay! But from that moment onwards, I was a changed woman! Every vestige of happiness was shred from my life!

How awful the people of the world appeared to me now! How utterly worthless their sentiments seemed to me and how dumb their wars appeared as if they were as dumb as predator animals who were on a scavenging hunt!

Oh, the heedless men and women! They have no idea about the Might and Power of their God! No clue have

they about the love God has for them! No idea have they about the reality of the next life! Oh, those who fight, love, shed blood, loot and plunder and quarrel like children and engage in romance and seduction like dumb animals have no idea about how true the hereafter is! They are left to flounder in the depreciated earth with no sense, no brain, no wisdom and no thoughts!

Had they known that the end of life is fast approaching, and no amount of gold and silver, no wealth, no lover and no power shall accompany them to their grave nor give them solace in the next world! Only the All-Knowing God shall be there to control every aspect of the afterlife.

In that fleeting moment, how my life had changed! I had witnessed God's unimaginable miracle! I saw with my very own eyes, the miracles the One God can do! Oh, how powerless man seemed next to the power of the Oft-Forgiving God! How worthless the life of this fugitive world and how brainless are those who fight and kill for this handful of numbered days of surviving mediocrely in this fake and fleeting world!

I had no fervor or desire to remain wallowing in this life! There was no hope for happiness in this meager world! I had no wish for affection or love in this interim world! My world was different now, because I had seen and witnessed the phenomena of another world! I saw the real outcome of mankind! Verily, I saw the reality of life and death! I saw the power of my God; I witnessed His love, and experienced that love he has for those who love Him and for those who obey and worship no one but Him!

Oh, nothing, no wealth. no power, no money, no lover and no family could make me want to live in this temporary world! Nothing could make me believe in this transitory life! No mortal power could make me afraid or impressed! For I had seen what no man could imagine in their wildest nightmare to have seen or known!

Oh, heavens and earth! Oh, this passing life and dreams of death! Oh, world of lovers of the earth and lovers of wealth, pride and power! Had you known how false the world is, you would never strive to gain it nor work for it! Had you known the frailty of the people who fight for power and wealth, you would have hastened away from their trivial demands! Oh, people! Had you seen the power of the lovers and saints of God, you would have abandoned the world and its people and gone to the altar of the One god who controls all the stars, the skies and the mountains and the oceans!

Oh, God of heavens! How can you expect me to live life like an ordinary person after what I have witnessed!

Almighty Creator of the heavens and the earth! Nothing but You is real! No love but Your love is true! No life but life in Your heaven is lasting! No friendship but Your friendship is real! No god but You is real! No happiness but the happiness of Your heaven is absolute! All the promises of people, all the hatred of the enemies, all the love of the friends are false, and all the glitters of golds, all the comfort in luxuries and all the reality we see or feel is a false charade. There is no God but You, O God of Abraham! Let my soul bear witness to Your

**Glory and Power. Let my heart pledge fealty to Your
Mercy and Your unfathomable Love!**

**Farewell, O princess of the world! Fare thee well, O
friend of the One God!
Farewell to you, O successful one! I bid thee farewell, O
the luckiest girl!**

**I had parried around like a mad woman! My heart was
heavy with the jarring effects of the chimerical events of
the past few days, and I found it quite unbearable to
understand the meaning of these actions. I had wished
for nothing save to lay me down to sleep, and never
awake from the blissful slumber except to rise to meet
with my Everlasting God to Whom one day, I along
with the rest of mankind, must return. Oh, how false
and meager the world seemed to me that no more had I
any desire to dwell in its narrow expanse. I had no more
desire to survive amidst the squalor of mortality, or
suffer scorn from the dregs of society.**

Dirges of Hope

**"Oh, True Believer, let no fear of pain,
Nor friendly favour, nor menace, nor dread,**

**Divert thee from the path, that thou shouldst tread.
To reach Al Jannat, where thou wouldst't attain;
'tis not for thee professing Islam's name,
To rest ignoble. Though thy progress slow,
Enough if onward ever it doth show,
So that each daily step advance doth claim,
And helpeth thee to further progress still;
The way to Paradise all onward lies,
Keep Islam's path, nor e'er disheartened be;
And ever yielding to great Allah's will,
Then guidance light and peace will for thee rise,
He loveth those who persevere like thee,
And from all worldly fetters sets them free."**
William Henry Quilliam (10 April 1856 – 23 April 1932)

**Oh, how I wanted to forget about this existentialist
universe and evaporate from this horror-filled realm,
but then I remembered the bracelet she gave me and the
poignant words of her last will and advice reverberated
in my ears. I knew I must visit her mother by mustering
whatever shreds of courage, sanity and strength I had
left before it was too late!**

I then embarked on the long and tiresome journey across the desert to meet her mother and fulfill her last wishes.

After she had completed her narration, the Queen of Hejaz cried out:

“Oh, old woman! Have you compelled the precious hand of my most beautiful princess to dust the carpet of your house?

Elderly woman, have you made the only princess of this kingdom and the daughter of the king and queen, whose blood flowed the vestiges of royalty for generations, work for her bread?

Oh, old woman! Have you made the princess and the future queen of your kingdom, the heiress of this nation, the scion of your country work for her bread as a domestic help to you?

Oh, old woman! Have you indeed obliged my daughter, in whose veins runs the blood of a thousand kings, work for her bread and earn her daily food with proletarian toil, pain and suffering?

Oh, unfortunate feeble woman! Have you really made my princess, a noble child unaccustomed to rifts and labor, who never picked up a glass of water in her life and had so many thousands of servants to attend her, have you made her a common servant in your own home?”

The queen acted on constituted authority to govern the people of Hejaz and no turmoil vexed her enough to abandon her poise and grace, but grief of a mother had no bounds, and as the monarch beheld the woman who claimed to have buried the princess, she could not contain her passions, and said in an emotional burst:

**“Oh, old woman! Have you made my darling, my princess and the future queen work and be a servant to earn her bread and to become worthy of her living?
Oh, old woman! Have you made the princess who never cooked a meal in her life work for you? Oh, old woman! Have you made the body of my princess toil and work hard to earn a meager wage, when from her birth, she was attended by thousands of servants and was deluged in a utopian paradise until the day she took her leave from here?
Misery and regret befall you, O old woman! Have you felt no guilt to make a princess, the daughter of a king and queen, do your house work as if she were someone who was accustomed to menial labor?”**

**“Oh, old woman! Have you made my darling princess go through such pain and suffering just to earn a meager portion of her daily bread?
Oh, ignoble old woman! Had you no mercy on her royal head? Had you shown no mercy on the princess, for whom all the men and women of this kingdom revered and cherished, and they would gladly worship the ground she treads on or worked in, and yet you had made her a servant in your home?”**

**“Oh, old woman! Have you no feelings? Have you no mercy? Have you no decency in your heart, that you were capable of meting out such treatment to your future queen?
Oh, old woman! What have you done? What have you done to my child? What have you done to my daughter? What have you done to my princess? What have you done to the next queen of your kingdom and your country?”**

As the Queen of Hejaz went on asking these questions, she wept most bitterly until she thought she would faint and all the people of the Kingdom wept along with her. She tried hard to fight back the tears, but she could not make herself to glance at the old woman who was so filled with sorrow and guilt.

In a pained voice, the ordinary woman curtsied down before the queen and begged her forgiveness, and said these words in a most humble tone: “Indeed, my queen, you are right in rebuking me. Oh, Your Majesty, had I known that she was your daughter, I would not have subjected her to such menial labor! Indeed, how could I have known? How could I have known who the young woman really was? Oh, my queen! How could I ever have guessed or known the truth? Oh, queen of this kingdom! Find in your heart to forgive me for not knowing who your daughter was and for not being able to take better care of her. Do find it in your heart to forgive me and to forgive your daughter.”

The Queen of Hejaz sprang to her feet. “Oh, woman! Have you really used the hands of my imperial daughter to clean the dirt of your home? Have you felt no mercy and no affection towards a young girl who came to you begging for sustenance? Have you used the unworked and pristine hands of my princess daughter to clean the dirty floor of your hearth? Had my darling daughter been compelled preen the garden of your house and polish the crude bricks of your outhouse for a mere meal? Have you made my princess my kingdom's future queen work hard until her hands became sore and pained, in order to earn her daily bread?”

The elegant queen paused momentarily and considered her past life. She was the all-powerful ruler of this land, and when she oversaw court decisions, it was for the sake of correction, and to judge the actions of infallible subjects, which consistently was on par with human expectation. The wise men and women of Hejaz were pleased with the ordinance of this society and none had any doubts their sovereign was righteous. But the queen was a human, and a mother, and in her grief, she could not reason with her conscience, and cried out once more:

“Had you shown no mercy upon the young princess? Indeed, how could you have done this to the child who had never worked a day in her life, but had thousands of servants to attend her? And yet, she abandoned all luxuries of this world, and gave up her titles, prestige, jewelries and wealth for the love of her God, and she resolved to spend the rest of her days in worship, and yet you had made her work with her dear hands and her feet which was never chanced upon work before? Have you done this to my darling princess without any remorse or without any pain and suffering? Have you never felt any guilt by treating thus the future queen of your country?”

As the queen went on asking these questions, in somewhat rhetorical tone, for in her heart, the intricacies of a sovereign no longer pulsed, but she was now a grieving mother, lamenting the loss of her only child!

The old woman's heart broke terribly with acute anguish that was beyond anything she ever felt before. Her eyes upon the birds, fluttering their wings in the Royal Garden. How innocent and carefree were these

creatures! But she was suffering from acute guilt, and she too started shaking and weeping profusely along with the queen for the death of the most valuable princess of this era and the prized scion of this century.

Every time, the queen posed these questions to her, she felt her heart break into more than a million pieces. She too began to weep in anguish and uttered desperate lamentations, beseeching thus: “Alas, had I known! If only I had known that she was the daughter of the most powerful queen in the world, then I would not have treated her in such a manner! I would never have treated her as a menial servant. But how could I know the reality? Indeed, when your daughter arrived at my doorstep, dressed in tattered rags, and was asking for a day job, how could I know that she was not accustomed to working? I did believe that she preferred this life of earning her bread in the mediocre way and to live each day as if it was the last and to pray each prayer to God as if it was the last supplication of her life and to spend her days worshiping God and her evenings crying earnestly to her Sustainer, praying for the good of the people!

How could I have known that she was destined to inherit the Kingdom of Hejaz one day, and had a thousand servants attending to her from the day she was born until the day she left the wealthiest Kingdom in the world and left it all for the love of God and for the worshiping of her Creator and to build her relationship with God? Indeed, I now realize that this world and this life, this Kingdom and this Palace had no worth to her compared to her relationship with God and the power of His eternal kingdom and the promise of His heaven in the afterlife and the reality of the perpetual Hereafter!

Have you made my princess, who was born to rule, toil with her sweat and tears to earn her meal when she never lived a day without a thousand ladies maid attending her?

Have you really made my princess labor and clean your home with hands that never was used for such menial purpose?

Have you made my most cherished and beloved child shed away her sweat and tears for a piece of bread? Oh, woman! Have you no feelings? Had you no mercy towards the most revered woman that walked the earth?

Have you made her royal dresses and noble attire besmirched with vile dirt and dust of the layman's bricks and unworthy masonry activities?

Had you made the most dignified woman that exhaled breath on this earth work like an ordinary servant for her meager meal?

When I approached you, O sovereign and Queen of Hejaz, I glanced mournfully at the monarch's seat, and understood the depth of your sadness as you wept.

Little did she know how the princess's parents were humbled and thrilled to see this lovely child, and as the princess got older and wiser, her charms melted even the hardest hearts and her beauty mesmerized the young and the old alike. When she embarked upon national tours annually and accompanied her mother to travel around the kingdom, her honey-colored bright eyes and long silken hair that was magnificently streaked with sun light, reduced onlookers to tears of joy, and even great orators were speechless in wonder in her presence. Such was the munificence of the Princess

Royal, who was destined to become the sovereign of Hejaz, the Defender of the Faith and the Leader of the Faithful.

The princess was of the kindest demeanor and frequent smiles appeared unbidden on her beautiful face. Her ladies-in-waiting would marvel at how the princess's face glowed like a flower and every time she smiled, and utter warmth flowed from her golden heart.

The Queen of Hejaz once more cried out:

“Old woman! Have you really buried my child, the young golden-haired princess who was a child of laughter, joy, and spirit, my darling baby girl, with your own hands?”

“Indeed, I have, Your Majesty.” She replied demurely.

“Let me see your hand,” the Queen of Hejaz demanded suddenly. “Show me the hand that touched my beautiful child for the last time.”

As the matron held out a trembling hand, the queen clasped them in between her own and uttered a loud cry. Fountains of tears poured from the mother's eyes, as she bent to kiss the top of the old woman's hand.

“Oh, kind woman!” She said, “blessed are your hands which have buried my princess!” And the queen could not halt the tears from rushing from her eyes. They were as inexorable and unstoppable as the ocean tides.

The queen added a nod of encouragement and entreated her to spare no details.

The matron continued to speak:

The terror I experienced in the ocean was unspeakable, and I noticed rain pelting hails upon us, and violent wind and gale was creating countless avalanche of icy ocean waves. The churning waves smashed through the

rusted frame of the scroungy boat, and large droplets of salty water felt like sharp razors, as it sliced and struck the wooden side panels.

With fright, I screamed as the encompassing waves smashed into me and ripped off entire panels of the boat frame.

All that now remained were twisted wooden slates and broken timber.

I screamed in horror as wave after wave overpowered me, and my shrill and helpless cries echoed in my own ears and was lost amidst the sound of the howling wind.

The sea then quieted and remained unusually quiet. There were no hurricanes, no storms or gales and no tropical disturbances in the Atlantic. The mighty Atlantic that had moments ago raged furiously not showed no sign of tropical activity! I glanced heavenward, and noticed that the peak of the hurricane had disappeared. What a miracle!

The woman continued to narrate what had taken place. “I said a brief tremulous prayer and then buried the young princess as gently as I could, and then stepped back into the boat. With trepidation, I saw a giant wave coming towards me, and in fright, I fainted! When I came my senses, I was afloat. Upon regaining consciousness fully, I saw that there was water all around me, and the boat was floating peacefully atop the rippling waves. It seemed like the most ordinary day with the small boat sailing most naturally, and so I resolved to return. I rowed and rowed, until the boat neared the direction of my country, and I urged the meek vessel forward, eager to reach the shores, while

still clasping in my hands, with the most ardent devotion and trust, the bejeweled relic which the young woman had entrusted to me. When I disembarked, the piece of jewel was still in my hands.”

O old woman! Indeed, you have broken my heart! Pray, tell! How could you have done this to the princess and the future queen of your country?

How, O how could you have made her work so hard to earn her bread? Oh, how lonely had my daughter been when she left the treasures of the world and comfort of my kingdom and forsook all the power and all the luxury life had to offer, and abandoned the pursuit of all the love and all the companionship in the world for a life of solitude to spend her days praying and her nights worshipping God alone and resolved to reside by herself, in a place so far, far away from people. She longed to be alone among strangers who knew neither about her rank nor about her noble birth nor about her luxurious upbringing not about the thousands of servers and maids who waited upon her day and night!

The queen looked wistfully at the sky and signed. “Oh, my darling child! What idea had come upon you that you cast away the kingdom of the universe for the pursuit of loneliness and the sanctuary of solitude to build your relationship with God? Indeed, your Lord had blessed you with a piece of the eternal power and perpetual kingdom that is beyond the realm of human understanding!”

“Oh, my daughter! Indeed, accolades of the afterlife awaits you as you shall be seated amongst the prophets and the most beloved friends of God in the Day of Resurrection!

Surely, you Creator will not ignore the sacrifice you have made, the torment you have undertaken, and the luxuries you have sacrificed for Him!

Oh, my darling child! Indeed, your God loved you and verily you loved your God most earnestly, and most assuredly, He will reward you with the most worthy of the rewards!"

Oh, let me break away from my kingdom and get away from the people!

Let the greedy men and women quarrel over prestige, and fight over wealth.

Let the power mongers hate.

Let the greedy souls engage in gluttony and fight over the world and the futile wealth of the fleeting temporary world.

Let them fight and kill each other over this useless world until they all die, one by one.

O take me away! Take me away this instant, away from treachery, away from crudeness, away from this falsehood, away from mortal weakness, away from all the false promises, away from all the idle hopes, away from all the expendable kingdoms that give no peace, away from all the fictitious power that is misleading, away from all the love which is false, away from the deceptive love and affection that will become fake in the end!

O take me away this moment! Take me away from here to see my darling princess! Let me see how she is and where she was lain.

O let me kiss the ground she rests beneath!

Let me say a prayer for her!

Let my heart be tranquil a while!

Let me reunite with my beloved child!

**Let me worship the God in whose care my daughter
now resides.**

**O what false promises of happiness does this kingdom
give!**

Oh, false hopes of the vast empires!

Oh, how painful and how unreal and helpless we are!

**How short the life of this world is! How unprofitable the
kingdom of the world and the power of this world is!**

**How much unhappiness and hopelessness are trapped
within the walls of these palatial gardens! Take me
away at once! Make haste and take me away to see my
darling child!**

**Indeed, the promises of these kingdoms and domain are
false, and the certainty of wealth is a deception.**

**Oh, what value has my kingdom? Oh, what worth has
my royal kingdom to me now that my only daughter has
gone away to God?**

**Alas, what is this vast treasure worth and what value
has the kingdom? What worth is there in all the recess
of power of troves these gold and silver over which
knight and soldiers, kings and subjects vie about? What
worth has the wealth for which men mow down one
another and struggle to retain that temporary power?**

**What worth has this life to me? Verily, my life has no
meaning! It has no worth! My life is valueless without
my only child!**

**Indeed, this life is as false as the shallow dreams which
vanish at the break of dawn!**

Oh, would to God I remained at my daughter's side!

**Oh, take me away from this world, and let me see the
resting place of my daughter!**

Alas! I cannot wait even one moment longer! I must see the resting place of my only child, my baby girl, so I can cry freely and bathe her grave with my tears!

Let me talk to my daughter, so that her God can convey my words to her in heaven! Oh, it is true that this world and the kingdom, these cold marbles and precious stones, and the majestic palace has no meaning to me anymore!

This wealth that people fight over, these palaces who they vie to reside in, the kingdoms of power, and the treasures of wealth are all lies! Oh, take me away from here at once and let me see the place where my daughter died! Let me stand beside the auspicious dust beneath which my daughter lay!

Oh, woman! I say, take me to my daughter's place of rest!

The grieving monarch wailed into the void and raised her face to the heavens and cried out: “Oh, my child! Indeed, you have left me in this world quite desolate and alone. Indeed, you have left your mother empty-handed and empty-hearted as you left for your God. Indeed, you will find unwavering, unending true love and peace with your Lord and your Creator.

Oh, my child! You have broken my heart! You have shattered my soul! You have made my life feel false and left me alone to be impaled with a pain which is so intense, that it flabbergasts me and destroys me entirely! Oh, my darling princess! You had left your kingdom and gave up your birth right, and gave up all the riches and luxury and the adoration of your people and the unconditional love of your family and the joy of a royal lifestyle, and the comfort of your Palace and you had left it all for your God's love alone. Indeed, you were always wise, my child, and you possessed true love in your young heart! Understandably, when you saw the love of the true God, you recognized it and left all the false life behind! Now, your Mighty Lord had raised you to His own heaven!

Oh, my darling princess! My life is empty without you! Indeed, my kingdom is worth nothing to me! My wealth has no value to me ever since you have shown me how false my life was and how worthless the money and power of this monarchy is!” Choking out these words, the queen sobbed uncontrollably until her velvet gown and all her jewels became drenched in her interminable tears.

She whispered, “Indeed, you have found true love, my child. Indeed, you have found true happiness. Indeed, you have found the true meaning of life and indeed your God had taken you away from this world which was unworthy of you, which was unworthy of your goodness and unworthy of your purity, and unworthy of your

holiness, and unworthy of all the goodness that you had to offer!”

**“Oh, God of Heaven who took away my child!
Oh, God of the universe who controls the kings of all the kingdoms of this world, and who owns the beauty of all the charming things, and who controls the love of all the lovers, and who controls the hearts of all the leaders, and who controls the wealth of all the empires, and the power of all the rulers, be my witness that I have joined my daughter in her belief! Be my witness that I surrender my kingdom for You, and for gaining Your love and the love of my daughter.**

**Be my witness, O Allah, when I destroy my crown!
Be my witness when I dissolve my kingdom, leave my people and my country. I leave them all for Your love and Your nearness alone!**

Oh, Lord who keeps my daughter in His heaven! Cast Your sight unto my heart have mercy on it! Take the pain away and let me love You and You love me back the way You had loved my only child, who was a seeker of Your seekers rather than being a follower of mortal emperors.”

With these words, the Queen of Hejaz flung away her crown, and tore away all her jewelries, and tossed away the thousand beads of pears which adorned the neck of royal women for centuries.

She gave away her most expensive piece of jewelry and walked away from her kingdom.

She left the throng of people who had gathered to bid her farewell, and who stood in awe at her tremendous change. They understood that the Queen was abandoning the Kingdom of Hejaz in order to devote her remaining days in prayers and meditation. She sought to spend every moment from now on, worshipping

God alone, loving God alone and praying and fasting for him and spend the rest of her days and nights supplicating to the God of Abraham for her child who had preceded her in traveling to the land of death! She wanted to pray for all those who were suffering around the world. So ardently had she desired to spend the rest of her waking days and nights in the worship of God alone that she flung aside the unparalleled power and abundant wealth of her monarchy and chose to live the ordinary life of a beggarly saint whose only identity would be that she was a worshiper and a lover of God.

Indeed, the Queen of Hejaz had seen the reality of this world, as her daughter had before her. Her present state was destitute of tranquility and she knew that giving up her monarchy was nothing compared to the rewards of the afterlife, although her spiritual experience enabled her heart to heal, she wistfully hoped that she had understood the temporariness of this mortal kingdom much earlier in life. Undoubtedly, the experience of no previous ruler of Hejaz could furnish a parallel with how this queen and her daughter had transcended the tiers of ascension and power, and appreciated the short duration and the worthlessness of the luxury of this temporary world.

The noble sovereign had lost even the energy to speak, and at last, she uttered in whispered cry: Where have you abandoned my daughter?

The queen shuddered in grief, as the news-bearer spoke, and before the messenger delivered the fateful news, she had subsided into bitter sobs, and collapsed on the cold palace ground. The marbled hall echoed with her cries as she wept till twilight dimmed over the castle walls, and a starless night fell.

She stood forlornly in the chill hours of midnight, hoping that her daughter would return. She nodded briefly, motioning the palace staff to cease curtsyng, and then she gazed at her lady-in-waiting with eyes of sorrow.

The queen was seated in a great chair beside the fireplace, when she heard the commotion echoing faintly over the castle walls.

The Queen of Hejaz felt ill in the body, and waves of grief overtook her as she stood alone in the glass-paneled corridors of the great palace.

Her body was wrought with ache and fatigue. Her daughter has gone to the next world, a dominion which was controlled by a God who had indomitable power that governed the course of mortal affairs.

The Princess Royal had given up her kingdom, and gave up her role as the successor to the throne, and while her peers condemned her decision as a rash one, she felt as though her soul had been liberated from an incorporeal tragedy. Ever since the queen heard the news of her daughter's death, devastating waves of suffering rattled her senses so morbidly, that she had lost the will to rule or reign. Only one action beckoned to her and that was weeping.

With tear-filled eyes, she abandoned her throne and wandered like a blind traveler, as she traversed through the palace grounds, calling unto her lost child between fits of sobs.

She had kept this lost hope alive that her daughter was going to return one day, that she had somehow survived the jaws of death, and that she would come home and fulfil her destiny.

The queen was resolutely clinging to the sweet but impossible chimera that her child lived, and this dimmest hope allowed her to keep the colossal might of her anguish at bay.

She sought God in the merciful solitudes of the night, and prayed for her deliverance.

The young girl wept like a despairing vagrant, who had nowhere to go, no one to rely on.

The Princess Royal looked forward to the day when she could cheerfully abandon her soft bed in exchange for a hardened cot, and would relinquish scores of feathered pillows for a cold quilt. The princess knew she would be much happier sleeping on the bare floor and remembering her Lord, rather than indulge in the joys of royal life within the comfort of her palace.

As she watched the princess leave, the queen felt bereaved, as though someone had torn a portion of her heart and walked away.

She spoke with an answering smile.

Amidst the vibrating bond of mutual love, she gazed upon the bright creature whom she had given birth to and to whom she had bequeathed her kingdom.

The princess felt as though the temporary life on earth was vain, and she was a product of a dreary life, heiress of a worn-out kingdom.

With a mode of vigorous consciousness which had never awakened before in her mind, the princess resolved to abandon the luxuriousness of the olden days and adopt a ascetic lifestyle, where she would not be vexed by the tremendous burdens of monarchy and rule.

She spoke earnestly and implored with bitter cries, hoping to prolong this moment of farewell, desiring for the inevitable parting never to take place.

The princess had discovered her love for the hereafter, her adoration for God's heaven, her compatibility for asceticism while soul searching during the long hours of the eventide.

She had never before experienced the unshrinking misery of despair.

Exhausted of all human dreams and mortal hope, the queen shut her eyes momentarily, trying to recreate the last image of the princess in her mind.

She uttered a cry of regret, before embarking on the carriage.

She gave a wail of pity and dissolved in to tears.

Why must I choose a life of turmoil and fear? Ah, mother dearest, I do not desire a kingdom where I would be considered great by some, but despised by

many, where my decrees may cause mayhem and misery, and I would have to bear the scorn and indignation of the masses.

Why had such sadness arrived, obtruding her life into a well of despair?

Oh, God of Adam, Abraham and Moses! Instill in my heart the love of Your Majesty!

My Lord! Protect my heart from darkness of the unknown future. Your kingdom is the real kingdom. Your promise is the true promise. Your love is the only true love. Your Hereafter is the only true life.

Indeed, my daughter had seen the reality of this life! Indeed, she had chosen the true path towards You. And she had displayed her benevolent actions and her new miracles before us, and verily, we know You have made her a friend of Yours. And whatever she desired, You fulfilled it for her, and whatever she asked for, You had granted it.

Oh, Most Merciful Lord! Indeed, you loved my child more than I ever could.

Indeed, You loved her more than me and so I love You more than everything else, more than all the treasures of my kingdom and more than all my people and more than all my years of life!

Ah, how worthless are this wealth to me! How bitterly painful does this world now feel!

Alas, how powerless is my kingdom against the dagger of death, and how futile are these castle walls against the wrath of time and the temporariness of this world! What a false world I had nurtured within the dreaming life within the castle walls! How mundane were the

towering palaces that scraped the sky! Today, these seemingly infallible structures are but a sand castle which will be inevitably washed away by the whirling sand or the crushing waves from the adjacent sea. Indeed, every kingdom in this world will come to an end. Every king and queen, every tyrant and sovereign shall one day be lying down in the grave and have no one but You as their sole companion.

Why have I not recognized the temporality of this world? Why was my darling daughter able to understand the temporariness and the fleetingness of this castle within this kingdom which had been built with precious stones, and whose towers reaches the sky? How is it that people do not understand how worthless is the wealth of this world?

Can they not see that no matter how wealthy one is, no matter how much riches one has today, when he dies tomorrow, all of it will be taken.

How worthless are the lives of the Kings and the Queens and the wealth of the people who spend their entire life hoarding money and gold chasing after power, prestige, love and lust, property and kingdoms, when this world and all within it shall turn into dust, and in the end, the entirety of wealth, robustness of health and life itself shall be gone! How distressing are kingdoms where the monarchy is meant to be passed on to unloving and unloved kith and kindred, where the crown is bequeathed often to undeserving subjects and relatives, who nurture bitter rancor in their hearts, and occasionally demonstrate themselves as the worst enemy of the sovereign. And yet, when dear ones pass away, and loved ones die one after the other, the only heir or

successor who remains are the vilest creatures, who had somehow slayed the heirs who preceded him in order to gain the coveted position on the throne.

How deceiving and temporary is this world!
How frugal is this life which people fight so madly over,
and how useless is every breath that people spent
fighting after it!

Alas, those men and women who quarrel over meager provisions of this world are foolish like children. Like adolescents, they fight with each other over the trinkets and toys they think will save them from death and tribulation.

Oh, why do those feeble-minded people think that wealth in this transitory life can protect them? Why should they imagine that a false promise of love will give them happiness? Why do they seek to duel one another over fragile friendships? They fight battles over land and gold like the gullible children who fight with other infants over dolls and toys! What difference is there between the two? Indeed, kings, emperors and monarchs will fight over kingdoms, but verily, their kingdoms, their castles, their power, their entire world is nothing but toys in the eyes of those who have seen the realities of the hereafter, and are worth less than the value of a mosquito's wing, to those who had voluntarily left the world and its riches behind them.

The world and all it contains, be it gold or silver, be it precious stones and diamond, be it silken sheets or ivory shields, shall all be destroyed like a child's toy, and all its imaginary glory shall be diminished and the vestiges of the wealth shall be passed on to the future generations, who will become once more, engrossed in the false comfort of these luxuries and will forget about the afterlife, and give up all hopes of salvation in the

eternity of their future for the temporary enjoyment of a brief time in the present.

With the death of her daughter's death, the Queen cried unto the heavens:

“Oh, what worth has this vile kingdom to me! What worth has this temporary and transient life to me now?! What use is this dominion when my most precious one has gone to her Lord?

Oh, how useless all this wealth is compared to the eternity of the afterlife of God's promised kingdom!

How many a king has passed away and how many a king will pass away in the future?

Oh, how desperately had those people fought their friends and battled their enemies and thought that this life was going to last forever, when no man or angel could be certain if this universe would subsist and exist even for a single day!

Oh, how worthless are the short-lived power of this life! How fleeting are the luxuries of this worlds and the how mundane its comfort are! Oh, how fake are the honor and prestige, how contemptible are the medallion and regalia of the empires, and how false and changing its love!

How indeed would she fare when traveling across the turbulent seas of the hereafter, when no friends or family would be of any avail and only the hope of Divine mercy would save the frantic mortals from annihilation? This was the only thought that raced across the mind of this princess as she spoke.

**O to think that man fights and murders, tortures and kills over this useless short-lived world!
O to know that man hates and works for this wealth and power which is so useless and so meaningless and so temporary to me now!"**

**Then the Queen of Hejaz raised her hands to heaven and uttered in an affectionate tone, hoping her little girl would hear a grieving mother's hope and despair:
"Farewell, my love!"**

The Story of Malik Bin Dinar

I was a young man of 19 years of age, but my wealth and riches were endless. I strutted proudly beneath the solemn skies, unvexed by the cares of the world, for I was naturally gifted with fine features, and a tall and strong body. People often gazed with awe and occasionally, envy, at my enviably perfect form. Young women swooned at me in fits of passion, and elderly couples sought my hand for their eligible daughters. I greatly enjoyed sampling the luxuries of life, especially tasting fine wine, and would devour huge quantities of intoxicants each day.

My name was often uttered with pride by my peers, who saw it befitting a man of my wealth and stature.

They called me Malik bin Dinar.

My life was a happy one, yet I was often terribly lonely and sad. I knew my years of indulgence was hurtling me down the stream of dissipation. I continued to usurp wine in excess and used my wealth to satisfy my vanity and gales of passion.

My well-built body was formed like an athlete, and none could equal me in prowess and vigor. I was a skilled sportsperson, and charming and pleasant demeanor came naturally to me. My attractive face and handsome body were prized possession desired and admired by all. The world was very kind to one who was endowed with wealth, strength and beauty like me!

I occasionally went backward and forward in my memory searching for a meaning in my existence, but there was none to be found. I was an uncommonly handsome rich man, and though I had a plethora of admirers, there was no place for me to seek internal solace. No member of my gleeful audience could proffer me honest advice when I asked counsel from them on manifold matters. But I was wealthy and so I dressed in tastefully embroidered tunics and blazing bright overcoats, which accentuated my graceful limbs and everyone in the city admired my proud and beautiful face.

Drinking wine was one of the preoccupations I had become entirely engrossed in. I had not found any lasting happiness in wealth and honor and sought happiness from my drinks. With my endless money, I purchased the most aged and expensive alcoholic wine, and I allowed myself to become consumed by the intoxicants.

I was not merely rich and handsome, but I had an obsession with my attires and followed the very latest fashion and was seen as a fashion icon for all. So I dressed very well, as each pair of my clothes were worth more than an average man's yearly income. I had immeasurable money and I used it to beautify myself in the finest collection of designer clothes.

Although rich and famous my heart was bereft of joy and I sometimes searched for a happiness that would calm my restless heart.

I felt no one I knew would have pity on me had they known my inner sadness and depression which I sometimes felt coming towards me at full speed.

Was it the evil sorrows of my innermost heart that did not allow me to hide my unhappiness? No obvious difficulties ailed me but, in my prosperity, I feared for future adversity, and who was strong enough to bear the burden of the adversities of the world? I possessed all the prosperities of the world, but it was the lack of a divine love that left me longing for more prosperity.

I had tremendous amount of wealth and it enabled me to act in any way I desired and also avoid penalties. My riches ensured I could do anything and get away with it, and so I used my wealth and power and did what I felt like doing.

Beautiful and wealthy women offered themselves for marriage at all times, and I finally accepted the

marriage proposal from a pretty heiress who had come from a prominent family.

I was wedded to her in the most grandeur festival, but the pomp and show of the marriage celebrations did not give me any great pleasure.

I had just married because it was required of me but I felt no peace in my heart.

I was lonely in a world which was cruelly mocking to me.

O the beauty of youthful years and happy days, yet ever dull and always the same! Within my wealth, I searched for joy; within beauty, I sought contentment and finding neither, I went plunging amid the path of intoxicants, and in wine I gained the reprieve I was looking for. I tasted, and hungered and thirsted after alcohol, and eventually, began to feel unhappy in this state. I had want for nothing in my life, and never faced any serious sorrow or harsh labor, but even then I believed I was a burden to myself. My life was specked with lamentable joys and I fought against joyous sorrows:

In derisive contempt, the riches of this life continued to flaunt itself to me, and my heart rebelled against itself, and I suddenly understood that I had no reason to be good.

I had never experienced the affection and love I sought.

My childhood was turbulent one, and adolescence was devoid of sincere friends and honest peers. I found it sensible to take refuge in human indulgence, by following my desires and indulging in every sinful act that I came across.

My heart was desolate. I searched for contentment in wealth and power, but I found only manifold distress in pursuit of joy, and at times, my life felt so utterly meaningless that I indulged in every sinful act to find happiness or discover a hidden purpose to this useless act in a play that man called life. Such wealth I had that I was often bias to my own conduct.

My pursuit of all the wealth in the world made me oblivious to God and Faith, and with a volatility of disposition, I continued to indulge in excessive drinking and partying with my aristocratic peers.

I drank wine and indulged in so much joy and desires, that I feared I would soon fall to the most abject stage of degradation.

One day, the gale was blowing and it was raining hard; and the clouds on the evening sky appeared dull and stormy. In that gloomy atmosphere, I sighed and contemplated on my life.

I had reached the age of twenty there was nothing that had classified as sin that I did not commit. Everything one could imagine; I had done that act. I heartily engaged in sinful behavior, excessive drinking and often ended up hurting others. There was not a sin mankind could conjure up which I did not act out.

But as days went by, my heart became more restless and more broken and I loathed myself with every passing hour. I was dismal because there was no direction to my life.

I survived each day, flaunting wealth and my physical beauty and prowess, and I sinned willfully, because inwardly, I searched for love or some meaning in life or a reason for this futile endurance but neither could I find any happiness nor any contentment nor any meaning to my useless life!

One morning, when I could not sleep at night because of the restlessness of my heart, and the guilt of my past sinful life, I left my bed and roamed aimlessly about the street till dawn. It was around this time, one day that I was walking, that I saw a young man almost my age walking with his daughter: a lovely girl of around five years of age. The child was so beautiful and so angelic that I was in awe. The little girl cheered with such a musical laughter and had such love for her father that something happened to my heart as I watched them from a distance. In my heart, I prayed silently to my God Who Created me: And increase, my Lord, Your gifts and kindness towards me, and save me from human weakness and concupiscence. I seek from You with prudence wherein I am still a sinner and imperfect human, but I hope for Your Mercy, so grant me a perfect child! The little girl had taken over all my thoughts: I prayed and I wished she were my daughter!

Alas! At that very moment, I had such a fervent wish to have a daughter like her! The desire came upon my heart that I must have a child, and the daughter would solve all my life's ineptness.

When I got home that day, I forgot about this encounter, and went about my usual daily routine. That evening, my wife told me she was expecting a child!

However, I thought myself suddenly unworthy to become a father, so I cared little about the joyful news and spent more time away from home. I continued to remain engrossed in the pursuit of wine, and scarcely went to check on my spouse.

Such drinking took its toll on me and in my drunken stupor, I became miserable and wearisome; snapping at neighbors continually, and fighting passersby with my fist, often exhausting their limited patience. Some would try to excuse my behavior citing my obvious state of intoxication, while others would acquiesce to the plea of ill-health and avoid interacting with me to the best of their abilities.

Then one day, as I walked home with a heavy heart, I noticed that most houses in the area were dark, and all visible lights were already extinguished. A few countrymen pulled their wagons along, carrying their life's wealth on it. The shops were closed.

Life was coming to a standstill, and a few people scattered around the roads, salvaging their day's work. Some young workers carried fish baskets on their shoulders, hurrying to the warmth of their home. All

was normal and peaceful. But my heart was anxious, and I hurried home.

It was already nine months since my wife had given me the news that she carried my child!

I did not believe the joyful news! But the unmistakable cry of the newborn infant burst like happy music in my ears!

My wife had given birth to the most beautiful baby girl.

My new source of joy was the birth of this bubbly-eyed daughter. My infant child was charming baby; cheerful in manners, and from cradle years, possessed keen feelings, and a lively temper. I loved my daughter most tenderly.

However, with the birth of my child, I became enamored with love and affection for the small infant, and I wanted my only child to be proficient in many languages and be educated in the greatest schools of the world, but the dissolute course of my life made all my hopes go astray.

I remember when I held my baby in my arm for the first time, my heart soared to heaven and I burst into a passion of tears promising the God who blessed my unworthy soul with such a beautiful innocent baby, that I would try my best to avoid sinning and endeavor to the best of my ability to be a worthy father to her!

I was not religious man and had scarcely any knowledge of religion but I knew some beloved anecdotes from the life of Prophet Muhammad, and I knew that he had loved his daughter Fatimah more than any human on earth could love a child. My ancestors, who knew the Prophet in person, told me how Prophet Muhammad always greeted his daughter most warmly upon returning from a journey. She was the first person he met upon arriving, and Fatimah his most beloved daughter- was always the last person he would bid farewell when departing for a journey. He loved her most ardently and sought to remain in her company for the longest time.

From my forefathers, I had heard about how the Prophet adored his children, and particularly his daughter Fatimah, and I heard how the noble Prophet, despite being the king of Arabia, and Apostle of Peace for the universe, chose to live a life of austerity, and as such, he bequeathed all the wealth that was in his possession to the poor, the orphan, the wayfarer and the needy. He left nothing for himself. Whatever riches or luxurious items that were gifted to him by the rulers and emperors of faraway lands, Prophet Muhammad gave those away, and having no items of value, he and his family often spent weeks and months in utter poverty, and even till his last days on this planet, the Prophet's noble household did not possess even droplets of oil to light the lamp at night as he passed away to a better world.

His wife and children would nourish themselves with the scant food or fruits they could afford, but the Prophet of Mercy remained in poverty for days on end.

Weeks and months would pass without him partaking one morsel of food, and when the pain of hunger gnawing at his blessed stomach became unbearable, the Prophet would have to tie stones on his stomach in order to appease the pain of starvation. Occasionally, if he did get one meal or receive an invitation to a dinner, then before tasting a single morsel himself, Prophet Muhammad would first wrap any delicacy or curry that was offered in a piece of bread, and dispatch it with his friends or request his host to send the meal to his daughter, Fatimah's house. Only after the messenger returned and confirmed that Fatimah had eaten would the Prophet finally agree to eat.

When I heard episodes from the Prophet's life and saw how earnestly he loved his daughter, I understood his feelings, as a new father of the most beautiful lovely angelic lovely girl, I appreciated his pain in seeing his daughter suffer from hunger.

Today, I understood the love he had for Fatimah. Today, I had become a father like him, and was the guardian of a beautiful daughter, and this was the first time in my life I understood what love meant.

Now that I understood how powerful was the love a father could feel for his daughter, immediately decided to name her after the prophet's daughter.

Thus, I named my infant Fatimah.

Days went by and every fiber of my heart grew fonder and fonder still of my only child.

Fatimah became the pride of my heart.

The extension of my bloodline.

The cause of my existence.

The blood of my veins.

The beating of my heart.

The soul of my body.

The reason for my living.

The cause for me changing my life style.

I desired to expend all my wealth in rearing this darling child, and I had spoiled her and taken care of her every wish and whim and strove to make her a real princess.

I deeply wished never to indulge in false behavior or sins thereafter.

Alas! I was but a man with fluctuating personality and had a flipping mood indeed, and time against time, I fell into a sort of depressed melancholy. Sometimes, despite trying so hard to stay away from every sin, I could not help but take wine to elevate my passionate feeling and emotions.

Oh, the wine! What was this wine that caused men to sin and surrender to desire?

Yes! I knew wine was the cause of all sinning and it was considered the mother of all evils. It made your heart light and careless. Intoxicants made you weak and lame!

No doubt wine made men weak towards all feelings and forced people to give up all self-control. It made you forget all the goodness.

Indeed, wine made you forget the blessing of your Lord which you enjoyed day and night.

Intoxicant was a vile thing for it made you pity yourself and justify sinning, by making you forget that you did not deserve the blessing your Lord had bestowed on you.

I knew wine made people ungrateful in life, and forgetful and fearless in committing sins. Wine made one so fearless that you nearly forget that God could cause death and bring about destruction in one moment, and the end could come while you are in the act of sinning!

Yes, verily, wine was the mother of all sins.

It was the cause and the reason of all evil actions done by man, from the beginning of time!

And wine cause all the guilt of your heart to vanish away. So, you could have sinned and hurt others but never feel guilt afterwards for wine had numbed your senses and thus, turning honorable men into pitiless and guiltless beasts.

And, yet, knowing all this, I could never let go off wine.

The smell of it, the taste of it and the urgency to indulge in its sweet bitter enjoyment was irresistible!

Meanwhile, my darling daughter grew a little older, and became a fine toddler.

The tiny human being became the delight of my life, and she uttered lovely words and even began to learn to call me Father! What a joy it was to have a child of your own! Oh what joy it was to be called father by such a lovely extension of yourself!

Oh who knew the happiness of a father and the pride they carry for their darling children.

From ages ago, I had a large collection of the most expensive wine in my cellar.

Occasionally, I would leisurely bring up a bottle and attempt to swirl the luxurious drink in my mouth, but whenever I tried to put the bottle to my lips, my daughter would knock it down and cause the contents to spill over the floor.

Alas! I was man of severe temperament and would it have been any one but her, I would have punished them severely, but I loved my child a million times more than I cherished the wine!

So, my days went on in this fashion.

Whenever I tried to drink wine, my little daughter would knock the bottle away from me, and I could not drink.

But I was not too upset over this, because she spent all her days on my lap learning new words and loved me like no one had ever loved me.

All day, I would wait to go home to hold the darling child in my arms and she would play with my long hair. My Fatima would sit for hours beside me, and we played childish games, until I forgot about all the unhappiness that vexes my life, and I lost count of the long hours which I spent in her dear company.

All the heaviness in my heart would vanish the moment I entered the threshold of my house and hear her laughter ring out like the sweetest lute. The musical childish voice would echo in my heart, and make me forget all pain and fear this life had offered me.

The days turned into months and months into years. I was adoring every moment of my life with my child!

Everyday my love increased for her than the day before until I almost forget all the sadness of my life.

Once, when I was walking down the road with my daughter, crossing through the busy streets, my sight fell on the store window. The towering stained glass of which adorned the shop from the floor to the ceiling was brilliantly clean, and as the scorching sun blazed on, it made the glass reflect everyone pristinely clearly. The glass window resembled the most exquisite mirror, and as I stood in front of the glass with my daughter, my heart took a violent turn and I stood, shaken in wonderment!

Was it really me?

Was this darling child really my daughter?

**Was this toddler who leapt lovingly on my shoulders
and held on to my hand really my own flesh and blood?**

**I was stunned to think that several years ago, before my
child was born, I had witnessed an identical
phenomenon, where a father was walking with his
lovely five-year-old daughter, and he too was walking
along these very paths, and as I stood then, watching
them in awe, I made a silent wish to Allah to grant me a
child of my own, who would be as fine and lovely as the
girl in the road. And to my utter shock and amazement,
my Creator the God of Abraham the Maker of Adam
had answered my unspoken wish and accepted my
prayer.**

**But as fate had written very Soon afterwards, I was
struck with the arrow of sorrow!**

How could I know what was in store for me?

**How could I have a clue of the agonizing torment that
was to befall on me?**

Oh if I had known! If only I had known!

How differently would I had lived then!

**If only I had a clue what a changed life would I have
led!**

**Not long after that day, I faced the worst fear any
parent might face in their lifetime!**

**Upon returning home that day, my beloved daughter
fell ill, and her health worsened day by day.**

**I was not special and I had no unnatural powers. My
child had fallen ill and what power had I do to change
fate?**

**Oh, how could anyone understand the fear than
encroached my heart as I stood in shock by her bedside,
and watched the little heart of my baby rise and fall
with pained breathing? I prayed in desperation and sat
next to her bed day and night proffering questions to
her to gain insight about her pain.**

**No doctor had I spared, no medicine had I kept aside,
and no path did I leave untrodden in trying to cure my
only child!**

**My little girl became weaker each day! Alas! Not too
long after this, I woke up one day to the petrifying noise
of my wife wailing and the servants' lamentations most
severely!**

Before I even asked them what had happened, I knew!

I knew!

Oh, a father's heart always knows!

**Had any man on earth from the beginning of time felt
what I felt that day?**

**Oh, no man on earth till the end of time had felt what
maddening pain tore my heart and was ripping my life
into a trillion pieces!**

I could neither stand nor sit!

I could not speak!

I could not even breathe!

My world shattered ! My life became blurry! All my past became empty! I doubted my own existence! I thought it must be a nightmare for if it weren't then certainly I wouldn't survive this pain.

I had thought I would die too in this languishing woe!

I welcomed death to take me wherever it had taken my child!

Oh, I could not bury the child! I would not bury her! But when the responsible men and women from the neighborhood came after one week and forced my Fatimah away from me, I went and lay myself in the grave beside her small body, clasping the tiny and fragile infant in my arms, pressing the lost jewel to my bereaving heart, hoping never to part. The world did not heed to my grief, and the mourners chided me, ordering me to release my child. When I refused, they interfered physically, and it took many a strong men to pull us apart.

Hot tears came rushing into my eyes, dimming my vision. The flowing tears blotted from my sight of the cemetery and visages of the mourners. The soft summer sun was gone, and I could feel the tears trickling down my cheeks, dripping over my lips and soaking my beard.

My Fatimah was dead, but I could not believe this was true.

My baby gone? How could I take it?

I did not accept her death. This could not be true, I said to myself! But behold, the tiny corpse was carried to the burial; and mourners went and returned without tears. As my darling child was being lain therein, and an elderly man read the funeral prayers, how I wept even during those prayers, wrought with a heavy heart and troubled mind, knowing that no mortal comfort or well-meant words or deceiving eulogy could heal my sorrow. No wealth or succor could drive this sadness from my mind. My child was gone, and my brief days of fatherhood had died along with it. Oh, the bitterness of sorrow I felt! No earthly treasures could exude the agony of pain out of my heart. For days, I tried to sleep in vain, and when slumber came, I awoke again, and found my grief not the least lessened.

Every day, I burst into a flood of tears at the most unexpected time and place, for a father's heart knows no respite from grief!

This flood of tears made me appear to my peers a nuisance. They believed I had defied all established

civility by my brazen emotion. I ran away from people and found myself in the middle of a marsh, wherein I gazed at the stars that seemed so far away from earth and yet they shined brightly! I prayed to God in Heaven: My Allah! I beg You to perfect Your mercies in me, and grant me the perfect peace, which shall never be swallowed up in pain.

After praying in these simple words, I retired myself to my dismal bed. But now, when there were none to see or hear me, I fell upon my knees on the floor; and, hiding my face in my hands, wept such tears as no man ever had cause to weep before me!

The next day, my routine was the same. I continued to go to the burial place of my daughter. Having availed myself of the dying twilight to search for the path that led to the cemetery, I marched briskly via the high roads and sat down to rest beside my beloved daughter's grave.

The freezing breeze whipped dismally over the roads, and I let my face get soaked by the chilled rainwater, trying to wash away the traces of tears from my cheeks. It was a terrible night for me. The pitchers of intoxicants I consumed made me feel doubly nauseas.

Oh, how stiff I felt when I got up the next morning, and the effects of nausea was still present. When the day closed upon me again, I sat in the miserable damp air and began to feel that choking sadness once more. I sought a place where I could acquire a large collection of wine and intoxicants and I began to wander drearily across the city roads. I walked for hours, but the inns were closed. I knocked on village gates but those were

shut. I continued searching for a store where I could purchase and devour wine, but fatigue began to overpower me. My body was sore and the tired legs trembled beneath me. But I crawled along a melancholy path and found a large collection of alcoholic drinks beside an old cottage. I drank all night to forget about the miseries of that day. At the break of dawn, misery haunted me again, and I drank intoxicants all day in order to forget about the sadness of the night. Since the day, my infant daughter had died, this was the life I lived, and with each day, more and more episodes of distress deluged my living hours. My youth was becoming a restless sea of sorrow and my once ordinary life had become a solicitous picture of grief.

Certain sorrow has its bound, and mankind can fashion a name for it.

There was a name for those women who lost their husbands. We considered them to be widows.

There was a name for those children who lost their parents. We called them orphans.

There was a name for husbands who lost their wives.

But there was no name on heaven or on earth for those parents who had lost their only child!

Because no word can describe the painful anguish and bitter sadness that burns the heart of a father who had lost his only daughter!

Oh, Life! Oh, Death! Oh, how I grieved for the lost love of the infant! In a moment, I had been deprived of being a father. In the darkness of the night, I gave way to the tears which I restrained during the day for fear of strangers deriding me, and for a brief moment, my heart reposed upon the tears that overflowed from my eyes, and soaked my beard.

For days, I could not accept the fact that she was gone. Her childish art works and paintings, her small clothes and every symbol in my house and roads made me so hysterical that local well-wishers feared for my sanity.

After her death For a brief period, I did not believe my child was gone! And so I could not cry or mourn for a daughter who still was among the living! Finally, one fine morning, a distant relative came to visit me, and they brought their young daughter, who resembled my own Fatimah so intricately, that I smiled and beckoned her near, calling her Fatimah! When the child frowned at my error, I suddenly remembered that this could not be my daughter for my child was gone! I had been unable to weep properly before that moment, but when my tears came, they spilled like an avalanche. My tears burst forth pitilessly like a beast who had no dearth of sorrow. My eyes shed tears so mercilessly as though it was a monster that would tear my heart into pieces.

I rushed to my daughter's burial place and sobbed: Oh, my daughter! Your father mourns you!

Oh, my child! You have broken your father's heart most terribly!

Oh, my beautiful child! Oh, my soul and waking reason for my life and me! Why have you left your father to this desolate and lonely world! Oh, what was left for me in this lonely world where I was but an outcast, forced to mourn my child in the wilderness of time? There was no more joy in life for me! How could a man ever laugh or smile freely as though his child shall never be taken away from him? How can men and women laugh and eat with leisure as though death shall never visit them, or take away their loved ones without cause or reason?

This world seemed to me a dreary and terrible place! All my happiness was in the grave with my child! All my pain and all my sufferings were bursting from the corner of my heart! Oh, what can a man even know about suffering and pain, and how can they understand my ethereal pain, fear and sadness?

I knelt beside the grave of my child, and I groaned in anguish! Oh, my child, are you alright or has the coldness of the grave given you chills and fever?

Oh, the darling of my heart! I have failed you, my child, and I could not keep you alive!

Oh, why did you have to be born only to be taken away from me?

For months, I wailed over my daughter's grave. My life was beyond desolate and no one could imagine the pain that I suffered during that period of my life!

Rain pounded the gravel roads, and the skeletal houses in the street looked dismal and gloomy. How could human beings seek happiness in these dreary cities? I burned in anguish, and could only think of consuming more wine, in order to forget about the terrible heartache, I was experiencing. How many other parents had to suffer like me and lose their only child? Could anyone ever understand what terrible sadness besieged my mind? Powerful gale continued to glaze the streets and the clouds and mist grayed the town to a ghostly translucence. And in every blast of wind, I heard the final moments of my daughter's life.

Oh, why had my Lord given her to me and then taken her away?!

What sin of mine had caused Him to punish me thus?

Oh, if mankind were to gather and deposited all their anguish in one heap, never could they fathom the pain that now tore my soul into wild madness!

Slowly, and slowly I had let all of life's pleasures go and sunk into a maddening routine.

I wished death upon myself and knew not how to hasten it!

So deep was my grief that I tried to forget this intense pain of loss by turning to my favorite companion: Wine.

I drank and drank until my mind was numb with forgetfulness.

Alcohol and liquor offered me a temporary respite from the intense sadness I was feeling.

I drank all day to forget about the sadness I felt the previous night!

I drank wine all night to forget about the terrible bereavement that besieged me during the day!

This was my habit, and with each day that passed, my sadness only increased, as did my thirst for intoxicants.

I drained a large bucket of wine, and finally gathered enough courage to return to my daughter's graveyard, and addressed her in my most fatherly manner: Oh, my daughter, why have you left your father and forsaken him to this lonely bitter world?!

Oh, my daughter! What have you done to your father's heart? What terrible grief beset your father's soul now that you have died? Darling child! What have you done to me?! For which sin of mine did I deserve this bitter pain?

Oh, the false world who breaks the hearts of people until they lose their soul!

Why have you taken the body of my daughter away from me and swallowed her into your cold lonely world of the dead?

Oh, cruel world! Do you find contentment in my suffering and laugh at my agony!

When my child passed away, and was gone from me, I hated my God! I despised my Creator! I tried to drink day and night, hoping to forget my misery. But aside from the smell of raw whiskey and wine on my breath, I did not find solace in drinking intoxicants.

But I was still drowning in sorrow and could not cope with the death of my daughter.

Why was my child dead? Why had the Lord tortured me thus?!

When I was so strong and believed I was untouchable by fragile human feelings towards others, how did my Lord punish me so severely?

Oh, how I hated His unchanging commandments! I despised all Goodness! And I declared an unannounced war on his commandments and sunk into my old habits that I practiced in my youthful days of sin, hate and debauchery!

Rain began once more, and I felt my heart tremble in fright and apprehension. My darling daughter would be petrified of the roaring wind and the upcoming gale! Oh, she was ever so frightened of the storm and lightning!

As Cold rainwater continued to thunder over the empty fields and lightening dazzled the ruins of cottages in the rundown town. A harsh wind was blowing across the field, and the sulking shadows cast by the houses upon the hills looked sepulchral and death-like. I was alone in my sorrow, forced to live in obscurity with my grief. Alas! I wanted nothing to do with goodness. For I was certain that goodness made men suffer. I wept bitterly often. Why should I be good when God still punished me?

Woe to me, for I had no reason to survive this pitiful life!

If my transgression did not destroy me, then I knew my grief would. What good was this life when all the loved ones are gone, and the world feels empty and unforgivable?

Walking in a hurried pace, I once more visited my daughter's resting place and stood forlornly by the headstone, and whispered words of comfort to my child who was dead. When I could not contain my grief any longer, I sighed bitterly and croaked:

Oh, my daughter! Your father mourns you and he cannot find any reason to continue living in this accursed world! Darling child! With you gone from this dreary earth, what reason has he to live for?

Those who witnessed me grieving assured me that my grief will pass. But my pain had not subdued even after many months. Those people had said time heals all

wounds but with me, time made my wound deeper and deeper until I wished for a speedy death every day because I felt that this human heart of mine could not tolerate this unbearable pain that was torturing my entire being!

Oh, all my world is lonely and my heart sad and my life empty!

Is this life worth at all to love or cherish?!

Is this the life human being live and fight for?

Can there be any reason for me to continue living in this accursed world where all familial love, and happiness must come to a bitter and painful end?

Oh, heart that breaks! Oh, soul that has lost its strength! Try to find contentment in the words of your Lord!

All the generations that came before us has passed on and all after us has to pass away and yet we fight to live longer in this unworthy world and strive to gain useless wealth and frivolous fame!

I lamented again and again, and cried unto the world that was deaf to my shouts of bereavement:

What have you done to me, O miserable world!?

What have you done to my soul that I cannot speak without dissolving into tears?!

What have you done to my soul, O Life, that keeps me awake at night with echoes of my own sobs?

The life I lived showed no pity, and I continued to bear the brunt of terrible grief each day. To dull the pain, I consumed wine, hoping to forget my agony, and secretly desiring to drink myself to death, because I wished I would die from overconsumption and rejoin with my daughter.

For weeks and months, I refused to partake any meals, or food, and I only drank intoxicants as hard wine.

Everyday, During the daytime I drank to forget my pains of the night and during the night I would take wine to forget the pain of my day.

I often lay passed out on the roadside, and remained heavily drunk most of my living hours. This was the only way I could think of coping with that loss which made my life beyond unbearable!

Alas! What had happened to me that I suffered so deeply?! Neighbors and former friends laughed and mocked me in disbelief and some pitied me, and they thought I was insane to grieve so desperately over the loss of a child. If only they would understand the pain I felt in a single moment, and if one second of my grief

were sprinkled upon them and dissipated over their entire life, then these people would know! Only then would they understand my sentiments, and they would not think of me to be mad!

Distant relatives and kind friends tried to give me company and offer words of comfort, but there was nothing that could calm my heart for I valued no one.

I was a proud and arrogant man whose heart was barricaded from all humans and only my daughter could enter upon it. And from the second Fatimah was born, she had become a part of me. She had overtaken all parts of me and when she was gone, I myself was gone.

I could not think of her to be alone in the grave and sometimes gave into passionate wailings near her resting place at the nighttime when all careless inhabitants of the world were sleeping. Ah, Life! O Death! O Time! O Tears! If only I knew how my heart's darling was doing now!

Then the thought and the denials returned again, and I cried to myself: No, she cannot be gone!

God did not make us only to turn us into dust!

No, my daughter was an angel with such love and such loyalty and such goodness that verily, such qualities can never be gone!

Oh, my beloved little one! How with impatience I await every moment of this tedious day, hoping my darling daughter would appear before me again.

I sighed, weeping intermittently in the lingering hours of the evening.

With enthusiastic haste, I rushed to that dear place of my garden where my daughter often stood, admiring the colorful petals of the roses, but who was more beautiful than every flower that ever bloomed in this earth.

I wondered hitherto, hoping my dear one would return but, alas! nowhere could my child be found. Once more, I waited till darkness overtook the cloud-decked skies, and I sat forlorn, my face streaming with unrestrained tears.

I repressed the tides of sorrow surging in my breast and withdrew from the garden.

Lonely in my abode, and abandoned to wallow in grief's deepest woes, I remembered the infant child that had once been my own, but now was gone from my life. The mere thought of my deceased daughter made me feel dead to all my life's happiness, as fresh tears poured on my pale cheeks.

Oh, world! I cried in silence. Take back all your useless wonders and bounteous delight. I care not for all of fortune's wealth and wine. But bring back my child to me, and let me call my Fatimah mine!

Cursed be this world and woe to these lands, for I have lost the most gentle one that lived. My most lovely child now dwelled beneath the mud, besmeared with foreign dust.

O the cruel earth that had made my fairest Fatimah reside with the dead!

O my sweetest daughter! Forever shall tears flow from your father's streaming eyes.

With trembling lips, I exclaimed with great emotion. Oh, my darling daughter in her grave! How I tremble to think of her distress in the loneliness of the cold dark abode beneath the moldy earth. Would not this sorrow break any father's heart? Oh, how I loved Fatimah, and how all doted upon the darling of my eyes!

Then, raising my eyes to the heavens, I cried:

My Merciful Maker! Do not cease showering mercy and compassion towards me, and aid me through this terrible sea of sorrow that consumed my whole heart!

There must be a heaven and there must be kind-eyed angels there who would take care of her and good-hearted guardians who would one day return Fatimah to me!

I could not live for another second here on this earth if I did not believe I would be reunited with my baby one day.

Indeed, I would have raged across earth and ravaged all of mankind if I thought that my life was so meaningless as to become a worthless pile of dust, or if I thought we,

like jungle beasts, would likely perish into nothingness, and all love, affection, good deeds, generous charities would disappear to the void!

I sighed morosely, and spoke to God: "My Maker! Even if I am destined to go to Your Hell, for I do not expect Your forgiveness for someone as unworthy as I am, then I beseech You to let me see my daughter once more and keep her with You in Your Paradise, and knowing my child is safe, I shall burn in Your hell without complain!

Oh, mankind! What do you know about the pain of departure?! What do you know of a pain that makes men mad?!

Can any mortal understand a fraction of the emotion I am feeling?

What do people know of love? How many of them had a daughter like me? Then how could they possibly know how I am suffering?

With utter misery as my only feeling and a pain that threatened to cut my heart into millions of pieces, I wondered about the Old City and saw people milling about the stores and markets cheerfully, and I wondered how man could be so forgetful and not know about my wretched state?

A handful of mourners stood murmuring prayers to their beloved one's departed soul, but I wished to be alone in my grief. And after I was left alone in the silence of the gloomy cemetery, I again burst into uncontrolled tears.

At times, I knelt in devotion, despite being an irreligious man, and prayed to the God of Abraham for the dear soul of my departed daughter.

These prayers unto Thy Divinity be the ransom, O Lord! I bind my heart with the bond of faith and trust in Thee to keep my daughter under Thy mercy and sever not her soul from Thy celestial protection!

My beloved daughter had died suddenly in her prime, and though her life was exceedingly short, it had been filled with beautiful wonders and sweet adventures, and each time I stood next to the tiny wooden bed that had belonged to her, I would dissolve into passionate tears. I resolved to keep her infancy alive, and my daughter's history adorned every corner of my dwelling. To remove the fear of forgetting, I took care to preserve all the childish treasures and toys which my keenly observant daughter has. Never would I allow anyone to remove these precious infantile toys from this abode. She was a little girl bearing a golden heart, but as a grieving father, I was stricken with fear of the unknown. My child was supposed to be present in this room, skipping freely as a child always does. Her stuffed toys were here, but my daughter was no more. Frozen with grief, I gazed at the precious piles of toy artifacts of my child, and wept bitterly, the echoes of my cries ringing in the

small room. When my misty eyes cleared, I was once more surprised to see that the room looked the same, the bed was still made, and the small figurines and colorful toys lay haphazardly around, as though my little girl had not taken leave of this world permanently, but was outside in that yonder garden. Surely, she will return, I said to myself.

I prayed so that no terror of darkness or horrors of the grave interposed itself on my child, by force or by fraud, by night or by day.

Oh, my Creator! Oh, Allah! I ask Thee for a forgiveness which my soul deserves not! And yet I have no one but You to turn to because all my life has gone away and all my past is blurred with disobedience and self loathe! Within the vast court of my memory, I find no solace in anything that existed in the past, and no joy in the heaven, earth, sea, and I seek naught of whatever is therein, besides a heart free of bereavement. Forgive me, O my Allah! I have only You! I sin against You! I disobey Your commandments and yet I turn to You! For who have I but You? Who has my daughter but You?

Winters became Spring, and grasses bloomed, but I did not find the colorful foliage of the city forests alluring or comforting. I grieved for my own loss, and every waking hour, I remembered the darling child who had died. This sadness was uncontainable. In despair, I consumed so much wine that I ultimately became a self-consumer of my sorrows. I sought solace in wine, hoping the paralyzing effects of the drink would intoxicate me

to a state of unconsciousness, and I dearly hoped that for those few moments, my heart would receive comfort and forget the aching grief that gnawed at every fiber of my body. There was no more sense of joy in my life, and I felt like a colossal shipwreck that was being cast away into a land of sorrow.

Day after day, I lingered at the graveyard where my daughter rested. I did not want the poor dear child to be alone in the cold subterranean immortal world. For hours, I spoke in the most soothing infant voice, choking back my tears, as I assured the child that her father would never abandon her or leave her eternal bedside. It was in this memorable vigil that I overheard a song. Some passerby was entertaining locals with the recitation of a folk song, but the echoes of his shrill voice interrupted my quiet time with my child.

Drowned in a drunken stupor, I ran to the singing man and raised my voice, howling in frustration, and demanded he cease singing at once. I warned them that my baby girl was buried in this cemetery and this incessant sound of his song would disrupt her childish sleep. "Let my child rest! I demanded in a wild tone, but the audience marveled at my reaction, and called me foolish for thinking my daughter will be vexed by this noise. The singer protested my interference and continued to sing. I thought how the dear delight of my heart would suffer from this uncouth gibberish spewing from their lips so I attempted to remove them from the street, using physical force. But the men struggled, and absorbed in my severe emotions, I hit them violently, striking the singer with my hands and shouting at them to leave my daughter's resting place at once. The commotion I started had attracted the attention of

many of the city dwellers and soon, the law enforcement officials were brought in. Armed men who upheld the law surrounded me, and they all chided me for breaking the peace of this town, and they dragged me to a prison, locking me inside a dark dreary cell where I was told to contemplate on my actions. After a long hour in the prison cell, the lethargic effects of the alcohol began to fade, and I was no longer intoxicated. But what misery befell me then! As though the night turned to day, and showered unwelcome light on the barren, barren earth, all my pain rebirthed in my heart, and the loss of my toddler became a mournful episode that was recurring again and again. The authorities of the city noticed my sobriety, and said I had unjustly struck a country singer without provocation, but in vain I protested that this was not true. The singing man was not desisting from disturbing my dear daughter's slumber, despite my repeated requests. In a state of drunken frenzy, I lashed out, and hit the man, hoping to ensure that my dear child could sleep without vexations. But oh, what terrible storm of sadness besieged my mind, and the thought of my dear child kept me awake in the dreary atmosphere of this cold cell. I began to wonder if my dearest Fatimah was enclosed in a distressing place such as this? No, it could not be! Providence would show a smiling face to my child. My darling daughter could never rest in the dark and cold shallow grave. With renewed agitation in my heart, I rose and cried to the guard to release me at once. My daughter is alone in the cemetery, and oh, I must be at her side! It was a building which housed inmates and criminals, but all around me, I discerned only the ambience of death. I looked forlornly at the impenetrable slits walls and

studied the narrow corridors and resolved not to allow such human barriers prevent me from being at the bedside of my dead child. I pleaded and entreated for reprieve, and begged the guard to release me. How I tried in vain to make them understand my child shall not be able to survive in that dreadful and dark pit in the cemetery ground.

There was not answer, and my pleas echoed around the stone walls of the prison, bouncing from cell to cell, floating away like the lost song of a winter bird that never lived to see the Spring. The dark and imposing prison walls were set deep into a steep rocky cliff, and the high fences prevented me from escaping. I longed to be with my daughter again, and as the dark shadows of the night loomed over my cell, I slipped away from the direction where the guard's tower was located, and scaled the walls of the prison building, eager to reunite with my Fatimah.

Due to the stifled rays of sunshine flowing in, I could tell that it was a bright summer day outside, and yet the prison corridor held the grim ambiance of death, desolation and decay.

The sole of my bare feet pounded against the cold stone floor as I raced to freedom, and returned to my daughter's resting place. No sooner had I crossed the threshold of the prison, clear night air rushed to greet me, as though the cold wind was bearing a message from my child.

Upon arriving at the cemetery, I noticed the soil was moist, and there was a lingering musty scent in the air. The splash of water pooling near the engraved

headstones bore testimony to recent rain. Ah, the rain! My brain felt as though it would explode in rage and desperation. How could I not take precaution to shelter my darling child from the rain? How would my Fatimah rest in her little grave if cold rainwater poured over the cemetery and seeped into the beloved space? How could my child survive in the damp and moist earth surrounding her? I raced to-and-fro, seizing planks of wood from the roadside stores, and gathering draperies from neighboring homes. Then I built a small tent directly above my daughter's tiny grave, hoping the shade will be sturdy enough to protect her from future rain and calamities!

When the next bout of rain burst from the blackened clouds, I throw myself over the tiny patch of ground beneath which my daughter lay and protected her from getting soaked by the icy rain, and I remained in this position until the rain ceased. In this dreary state, I fell into an exhausted slumber and became unconscious. Hours later, I awoke and found myself in my home. Alarmed, I leaped to my feet, and asked those around me what had happened. Sympathetic neighbors narrated to me that they had found me unresponsive, laying over my daughter's grave, and they lifted me up and brought me to my dwelling abode. For a few moments, I hesitated, for there was a sign on the calendar which indicated today was a special day. It was my daughter's birthday!

I drank wine all day to forget the pain of losing my only child, and finally, when the gray fog swirling over the city dissipated at noon, I resolved to celebrate my daughter's life in the most fitting way. In a drunken

slurred voice, I perched on the top of the city center building, and invited everyone to come and join me in my daughter's birthday party. Several passersby rebuked me for being foolish. They reminded me that my daughter was dead, and deceased people do not require birthday parties. However, consuming so many bottles of wine had dulled my intellect and I raged and raved at them, and warned them not to miss my special invitation. That evening, I returned home and collected all my money, and purchased expensive utensils and prepared a suitable feast for my daughter's party. I knew hundreds of people were scheduled to arrive, so I instructed my cook to roast large pots of food and desserts. However, night fell over the land and I stood eagerly beside the giant dining table laden with food, and waited for my guests to arrive. I admired the ice sculptures around the flower-decked dining hall, and rearranged the golden and silver goblets, certain that my guests would arrive promptly and drink to my daughter's happiness and success. The clock chimed ominously, echoing in a mournful tone. The hours ticked away. My daughter's birthday was fading away, but no guests appeared. I sent my doorman to knock from house to house, and summon the people to come and honor my daughter's birthday. No one came. Such sadness befell me that I could not speak or move. With a heavy heart, I clutched the large wine pitcher on the table and drowned the entire content in one gulp. But the pain of losing my daughter was still fresh in my mind, and in an attempt to drown away my sorrows, I again gulped more and more wine, until my senses had become dull and I was only partially conscious. Once more, I waited for the guests to come and celebrate my

daughter's birthday. It was futile, so none of my neighbors deemed it appropriate to celebrate a dead child's birthday party. The clock chimed midnight, and I began to realize no guests would arrive, and in my state of drunkenness had become severe and in a frenzy of maddening rage, I screamed and shouted within the vacant dining hall, and tried to vent my frustration by smashing the cutlery and utensils on the table. How could these foolish people not understand my daughter's birthday party is an important event? Why did they not realize that this invitation meant the whole world to my child? Why did they think my daughter was dead and gone? Such bitter thoughts flooded my mind and I continued to smash all the crystal glasses that were to be raised to celebrate my daughter's birthday, and I continued to break the porcelain tea sets and utensils one by one, all the goblets and plates had been shattered. I felt renewed anguish over the loss of my only child, and sinking to my knees amidst the shards of glass lying on the floor, I wept like a child. Oh, how desperately I missed my daughter!

Why should I be indentured to a world that seeks to ruin me while hiding miseries behind a mask of love? This sorrow-filled land that grins at our loss and lies to our dreams spreads out false years before our feet, deceiving us into the obscure night of atrophy and misery! How wretched the reality of this life had been! How it dethrones noblemen without warnings, and wipe out great cities in a single day? How swiftly one loses all wealth and joy? How unexpectedly do the loved ones

become deceased, while the survivors are condemned to live amidst the woeful strife?

Oh, my daughter who had died! She shall not be aware of the tears which I shed nor know of the sorrow that dwells in my soul! This world had beguiled and deceived me and I can only hope the life that will follow will not snatch away my beloved child from me again. Never had I wept more fitfully in my life than my daughter's burial day. Oh, how my heart shuddered as the hearse slowly bore her away from me! I can now be alive by believing that death has swept my infant to a better isle, where she rests beside a peaceful shore by a soundless sea.

With a torn and bleeding heart, I walked aimlessly around the city squares and lashed out miserably at anyone who accosted me. I halted at the roadside leading to my darling child's resting place, and my anguished tears flowed unstopably, soaking the earth of the cemetery. My wails and audible sighs of grief echoed in the evening winds, and my heart, of hopes and dreams bereft, sought a rendezvous with death.

The next day, I awoke to new miseries. Oh, how I cursed life for letting me live! How I pleaded with death to take me away to the land of the dead so I could be near my child! How could this baby girl survive in the cold grave? What forces shall tend to her or comfort her in the loneliness of the cold grave?

I drank so madly that I became severely intoxicated again. In vain, I tried to make people understand my pain. But they could not feel my pain! Those who saw

me languishing beneath shades of cypress trees called me a drunken fool. Others called me mad. But I was grieving. And in my grief, I was alone.

I had no other living soul to comfort my aching heart! My daughter was dead, and oh, it was as though everyone else in this world had turned away from me!

But what uncouth my behavior was! How could I seek to accompany my daughter in heaven when only sin and indecent behavior beset me? Had my own daughter been alive and seen the volume of my sins, even she would have despised me!

I could not control my sadness and cried bitterly whenever the effect of wine would start waning away and to control my convulsions and sobbing, I had to immediately take another bottle of wine.

Such was the way I passed all my bitter days.

Pain seared inside me every time I thought of my darling daughter. With maddening pain and wild tears that threatened to spill out from my eyes, and soak my beard, I mourned the death of my dearest Fatimah. This grief was tearing my soul away and I sought solace in the only thing that I knew would help me numb this desolate feeling. And so, I turned to wine-again and again , and drunk myself to oblivion. I drank all day to forget about the terrible sadness of the night, and I drank all night to forget about the dreary day.

It was one of those days when I had taken so much wine that I couldn't differentiate between the path leading to my abode and the road to city center, when I suddenly saw a huge snake chasing me.

The huge snake reared its frightening head, and suddenly started chasing me! I was horrified in shock and disbelief. I craned my neck to get a closer look and see whether the giant python had gained ground, I was petrified to witness the fiercest creature that ever existed. I was nearly frozen in fear, for I was certain that never had any man imagined a snake could be so black, so humongous that its length could fill the breadth of a massive river, and it had fiery large eyes that had liquid fire flowing out from it. Oh, it was the most horrible sight, as the snake glared at me with lynx-like eyes and rushed towards me with wide open gaping mouth. The snake pursued me ferociously, and I ran to get as far away from it as possible. As it pursued me, I knew not how I ran so fast, for never before in my life had I run so fiercely or desperately. With flailing arms and legs, I scissored over the paths and struggled for breath. The deadly snake was chasing after me like a jungle prey, and giving out an unearthly roar.

I ran and ran and ran. Every bone in my body was sore and felt as though it would break. I heard a noise behind me, and saw that the snake was drawing closer. It was about to lunge towards me, and I tripped, sprawling headfirst into the harsh terrain.

My heart was pounding wildly as if I had lost control of it. I ran blindly, charging forward, taking every turn I saw, but I did not falter or stop.

I looked left. I looked right. And as the huge python pursued me, I turned right and ran, and when I faced another obstacle, I turned left and ran with all the strength I never knew I had.

My situation was so maddeningly painful that I began to lose my grasp on reality. What frightening prospects awaited me! Was I more afraid of the fire pouring out of its blazing eyes, or was the fear of being bitten by a snake so beastly and so venomous overpowering all other human faculties? I could sense the bitter and deadly poison seething from the snake's breath. I could not imagine what the creature would do to me.

Oh, the fear that I felt! How could anyone imagine or understand the terror in my heart as I ran? My heart threatened to burst out of my ribcage and fresh terror seized me. In this terrible fear and extreme anguish, I did not know which direction I was running towards, or even where I was.

My heart burned from exertion, as I flew across the rocky ground. This exertion had robbed my lung of air. When faced with such deadly fear, a man cannot function and loses the ability to comprehend or think fast enough or come up with a strategy to save oneself.

I ran with such fierceness to save my life from that deadly bestial creature, that I was certain no human ever ran so desperately before. Such a terrible snake was never seen by any human before.

I cannot tell what I was more afraid of? Of losing my life, or succumbing to the vengeance of the maniac snake?

It was relentless in pursuing me, so I ran and ran, until I felt as though my heart would burst out of my chest. I exerted myself so much, that I feared my soul was seconds away from being ripped away from me by the monstrous creature which was chasing me viciously and O the panic I felt in that moment! Never before had anyone felt or imagined how it was to feel such fright! Nor could they know unless they too have been pursued by a deadly snake like this one.

My arms and feet started to shake violently and I ran, aghast with such blind terror that I could not make myself look back at the horrifying snake without freezing in terror. The beastly creature did not stop chasing me and pounced upon the ground mercilessly as it slithered endlessly after me.

I ran faster, gaining speed, but so did the gigantic beastly snake.

Then as the snake gained ground, I saw the faint glow of a frail looking old man, enrobed in all-white attire at a distance. In this dire situation, my strength had almost failed me but the fear of a terrible death made me muster every last ounce of strength for survival and I dragged my nearly paralyzed feet and panted and trudged over the sides of a tall mountain.

As I neared the snowy mountain, I came across an old, withered man, who was dressed in fine and elegantly pressed white clothes.

He looked so feeble with such a long flowing white beard, that I was astonished to see he even had the strength to remain standing on his feet!

However, his clothes were bright white and glowed like a light and some ethereal brightness was illuminating from his face.

As he stood there with the help of a walking stick, I notice his back was so bent with age that he could scarcely stay still.

I ran with desperation until I came near him.

I shouted. "Oh, old man! Help me, and save me from this malicious snake!"

I tried to cry out again for help, but I experienced a sharp difficulty in my utterance. "For God's sake, help me!"

There was no reply, so I cried with the passion of a wounded spirit. "Have pity upon me, O gentle old man! Have pity upon me!" When the man did not answer me at once, I shrieked, "Can you not see what terror is seizing me? Could you know how I am suffering in fright?"

The man spoke, with tearful eyes, and pleaded: "Young man, I am too weak and feeble. How can I help you?"

I shouted in terror and indignation. "Help me! I have no one else to turn to! I had been running for my life, and there was no one to save me!"

IN a pleading voice, the old man spoke: "I am too weak," replied he. "I am too old and frail to help you against such a mighty foe, truly it is beyond my power to help you. But you must go on running. Perhaps you might find someone who can help you save yourself from this deadly snake. Perhaps you can try to hide over the mountain. Perhaps the snake might not be able to climb the hill as fast!".

As I listened to feeble old man, my body convulsed in maddening exhaustion and pain. The wild terror I was facing had frozen the blood in my veins, and I could feel my hands shaking violently like winter leaves!

But I had to obey the old man's advice, and so with every ounce of strength, I forced myself to climb the mountain he pointed out to me.

Every muscle of my body screamed in pain, but I had to gather enough strength to pull up my body through such a deadly terrain and scale such an imposing height.

With fresh fear grappling my heart, and anguish threatening my very sanity, I swore to not look back, the terror of meeting the snake's eyes made me too paralyzed with fright.

No! I must not look back at the deadly beast which was chasing me!

It took so much strength and so much pain to climb the white mountain wall, but I had finally reached the top of the hill, but then what I saw nearly caused my heart to stop, for the scene before me shook my soul so turbulently that I cried out in fear and wailed in a bitterly hysterical sound.

Below the hill on the other side was a pit of liquid fire, resembling an erupting volcano hole, and to my utter horror, I saw men being dragged by chains and thrown into the center of the bubbling red flames, and as their screams thundered through the mountains, they burned in the molten lava.

Tall and strong and uniformed creatures were dragging people into the pit of fire, and chained them to the lava so that they could not escape.

Ah! So disturbing was the scene, and so deadly the violence and so maddening the destruction, that I became sick and vomited violently. Oh, how my soul gave in and decided to die, while my heart gave up the thought of self-preservation as the sight of this despair, and momentarily forgetting that I would not turn back, I whipped my face away from the terrible molten fire.

I forcibly averted my eyes, and my sight fell upon the deadliest scene that ever befell me!

To my horror, the petrifying snake had just reached the peak and seeing me standing still, the beast nearly pounced on me.

Oh, if I only could describe the fright! I had raced all my life, and was the fastest runner in my city, but never before had I run this fast, as I sprinted with a burst of madness and moved my legs wildly, trying to create as much distance between me and the fiery snake!

With a pit of fire and molten lava on my right and the snake on my left, I became disoriented and stumbled and fell repeatedly!

Yet, I forced myself back on my feet and fled from the snake with every drop of blood left in my heart.

As I reached the bottom of the mountain, there stood the old man with flowing white beard and white clothes and a soft glow of light illuminating his aristocratically aged face.

I cried out in frenzied madness: Oh, old man! Help me! For the sake of the almighty God, help me and save me! I have begged for your help before!

As I became hysterical with unimaginable fear and hopeless sobbing, I implored to him: For pity's sake, help me! Help me!

The old man looked as though he was trying to help me and asked me to come near. Then he said: Come! And go towards this path! Perhaps you can save yourself or hide from the creature who is pursuing you.

By this time, I was almost dead with pain and wild terror and was overwhelmed by my own frightening sobs. But I trusted the old man's words and I followed the path the old man showed me.

Once more, too afraid to look back, I ran with more vigor, nearly collapsing to the ground and becoming a prey to the otherworldly beast, but with that last drop of hope that a man has before death overcomes him, I ran and ran and ran until the dark valleys around me started to change color and I noticed the deathly ambience and fiery atmosphere was slowly turning into greenery.

Oh, sweet was the scene of such sunlight and such bright greenery and how beautiful were the soft hills and colorful gardens that saw, and as I ran deeper into the valley, my surroundings became more welcoming and beautiful.

Suddenly, I thought my ears were imagining sounds, but then I heard it clearly.

The unmistakable singing voice of children's' laughter!

But it could not be! How could I hear the laughter of children ringing through the valley?

Surely, it was impossible! This was a dangerous place, and I was being hunted by a beastly prey but how was I seeing a green garden around me, and soft sunlight bathing the grass and cheerful laughter of children ringing in my ears?

It was real! It was true!

Suddenly, I saw children running along the hill, and when they saw me, they chortled and became excited. They began to skip towards me with much joy!

They looked fearless and happy, unaware that I was being pursued by a deadly snake that looked worse than any beast that ever existed.

I tried in vain to shout and warn them of the impending danger, and I tried to beg them to stay away from me, lest the vile predator behind me target them.

However, the children ignored my warning and ran towards me.

My heart had almost given up hope by now, and I was ready to be consumed and killed by the monstrous snake. So, in order to save those children, I then tried to run away from them, and to my heart's shock, I thought the sound of a familiar voice wafted to my ears. It must have been a dream or wishful thinking! But I was sure I heard my daughter's familiar ringing laughter with which she charmed me on earth.

I froze in my place! Former pain flooded back, and I began to wonder, was it really my daughter? Could it be that she came back?

Was my daughter really playing with so many other lovely children?

As I came closer to the center of the green valley, there was no doubt remaining in my mind that the laughter had indeed belonged to my daughter, the jewel of my heart and the life of my soul!

My Fatimah! My baby!

The children who had seen me a moment ago now were all summoning her, calling out: O Fatimah! Look who is here! Come and see your father!

"Hurry, O Fatimah," said another child. "Your father has come to see you!"

Ah, while pain and fear tore through every vein of my heart and I believed my every last hope had been destroyed, there stood before me, my angelic daughter for whom for my life was given.

My Fatimah looked so ethereal and so beautiful that I could scarcely believe it was the same child that had succumbed to illness. My daughter looked so happy and healthy that my poor heart momentarily forgot that she had ever died.

My darling daughter ran towards me and I raced towards her with such hope, love and such madness that no one could know how I was feeling! How could any human know what feelings burns a father's heart when he sees his lost wish of all dreams when all hope was gone.

My child and I met midway, and she grabbed onto my knees, hugging me with her small arms.

Yes it was my child alright, my baby my own angel , my little piece of heart flesh and blood.

Joy washed over me, but my paternal instinct kicked in, and I remembered the murderous snake chasing me, and all the love I had for my child was now transformed into a blood curdling fear for her safety.

I almost screamed in fear and nearly fainted at the thought of losing my child all over again to the deadly beast that followed me. How could a child fight against the deadly snake, which was more overbearing than even the most powerful and strong man in the universe!

Alas! What have I done?

What have I done? How could I bring along with me unforgiving danger to the very place my daughter was living in? I glanced back and began to think of how I could possibly fight that monster and save my child!

The snake was gaining ground, and it looked more terrifying than ever, and resembled a giant beast.

The malignant creature was still pursuing me, and it bared venomous blood-thirsty fangs as it flashed the fiery face, with lava coming from its eyes. The snake was unearthly large and the eyes were piercingly frightening as though it had unnatural force in it.

It was hunting me with a sort of murderous and cannibalistic violence.

**My fear was great, but I also wanted to save my child!
How can I fight this beast?**

**Suddenly, as the snake came very close to me as I
screamed in a horror so frightful that I thought it not to
be my own.**

**At that moment my child saw the snake and as she held
onto to my garment with one hand, I saw my daughter
lift her other small hand and signal the snake to stop.**

**At once, the giant beast halted and lowered down its
monstrous eyes of fire. Then my child made a waving
gesture. Immediately the deadly creature bowed its
monstrous head and at the sign of her hand, the snake
turned around and slithered away.**

**After the terrible snake was gone, my daughter leapt
into my arms and I held her so tightly as if never to let
go off her again.**

**Although my heart was wrecked with so much
heartache, fear and pain, I held on to her with a love
that no one can imagine. My soul was weak from all the
horrors I faced, but when my child began to play with
my hair and beard, I forgot all the anguish and horrors
that had accosted me.**

**I clasped her to my heart and cried: "O Fatimah! My
daughter, is it really you? Is it really you? Oh, most
beloved one! Your father had missed you so!"**

**My child replied in her singsong voice: "Oh, my father!
Why are you sad?"**

I wept and said: "Oh, my baby! My angelic child! What is all this? What is happening to me? Where have you been all this time? Your father mourned you and his love for you had tortured him so greatly!"

"Dear father!" Cried out Fatimah! "I am in great happiness! Why do you mourn me?"

She continued in her innocent child voice:

"Oh, my father! When you mourn me, you make me sad and you break my heart for I am in a joyful place!"

"Oh, my father! I am so happy to be in this land and I have many cheerful friends with me!"

"Oh, my father! Why do you cry? Why do you weep?"

I replied in a feeble voice: "My child! I was afraid! Your father was afraid! I still cannot understand why the terrible snake chased me and what has happened here today?"

My darling daughter replied: "Oh, my father! The snake was your sins."

I looked at her in bewilderment, but she continued to explain:

"Dearest father! Your sins were so great and so many in number that it became a most powerful and violent snake. It was your sins that were seeking to torture you and punish you! But worry you not, O my father, for I will save you from that terrible beast, because verily

Allah will protect you and keep you safe for me, since you have suffered so much on my account."

"My dear child! It is all so confusing! How do you know so much about this place? I did not know about this valley," I explained tearfully, "had an old frail man not shown me this path!"

Upon hearing this, my daughter spoke again.

"Yes, the old man! Father, he was your good deeds! Your good deeds were so few in number that it had no strength to save you nor could it fight against the sins that had made the snake so strong. Your good deeds merely pointed to you the path to safety, although it could not assist you greatly. The snake, however, had become so powerful that it was about to push you into a pit of fire!"

I was moved to tears, and I asked her why she was dwelling in this place, and who her friends were.

"We are all children of Believers who had passed away in infancy. We shall live in this beautiful place until the day of Resurrection, and we are all waiting patiently to be reunited with our parents and our Allah will let us hold our parents and take them with us to paradise and I am eagerly awaiting to be with you again, dearest father! When you come to us at last, we shall intercede for you with our Lord."

She then recited in the most beautiful tone:

"Has the time not yet come for believers' hearts to be humbled at the remembrance of Allah and what has been revealed of the truth, and not be like those given the Scripture before—those who were spoiled for so long that their hearts became hardened. And many of them are still rebellious." Chapter Iron, Verse 16: (The Final Testament)

The soft melodious recitation of the verse still floated in my ear as the vision slowly faded, and I found myself in the same road where I had been walking.

I sank to my knees on the street beneath the night lamps flickering above the road, with the fear of the snake still heavy on my heart, and my surroundings became more and more visible. I had not known whether what I saw was a vision or reality.

I looked everywhere for my daughter and was confused and could not understand whether it was day or night.

I was in a daze, and I struggled to sit up and began to shake violently, eventually broke down, sobbing as I thought of my daughter and her last words. Realizing that she was gone broke my heart all over again! I looked around me. I recognized The narrow streets of my hometown and it were still calm, aside from occasional carriages thundering by, and white curtains fluttered from house windows, and as I saw twilight's last gleam fading into the horizon, I heard the clear and distinct crier call to prayer. The caller was summoning the faithful people to come to the Masjid to perform the evening prayer after sunset.

Once the call of prayer reached my ears, I was jolted into reality, and the world seemed surreal to me.

Suddenly, I tried to focus on the life ahead of me, and it sounded as though the man from the minaret was calling upon me to leave aside the busy chase of wine and wealth, and come to pray to Allah in the House of Worship.

The musical voice of the caller echoed in my ear, and the nostalgic tone brought back bitter memories of the past. This recollection had never before flashed before my mind, and I began to shed such bitter and painful tears, that I had to struggle against my nerves to compose myself.

At last, I calmed myself and seeing my pitiable state, the passersby on the street helped me to my feet.

I was then standing on the roadside, not knowing who to turn to or where to go.

Then the caller once more announced: "Come to prayer ! Come to success! Allah is the greatest!"

Hearing these phrases made me resolute, and I knew I had to pray at once!

I must pray to my Lord, who is the most Kind and Great!

He was my Maker ! He was my daughter's Maker!

I must offer prayers to the Allah who has kept my daughter safe in His heaven!

Who else but my Creator could be so merciful?

Who else but He had safe kept my baby? Who else but He loved me still after every unutterable ways I

disobeyed His laws! Only He could love me! Only could He still honor me ! And no one but He could still find forgiveness for a broken heart like mine!

In my fatigued state, I wobbled down the street like an old man and limped to the mosque.

I sat down and tried to perform ablution properly and washed my face and hands and wiped the top of my leather shoes and slowly walked towards the prayer mat and joined all the other believing men in their evening prayers.

The prayer of Maghreb began as soon as I entered the mosque and I heard the Imam start the opening prayers with the verse number 16 of the Chapter Iron, of the Final Testament!

My heart pounded and I shook uncontrollably.

Yes! It was the same verse I had heard my daughter read to me!

Yes, indeed, it was the very same verse I had heard only minutes ago, that had been recited to me by my dead daughter.

I became emotional again and although I tried hard to compose myself, my heart betrayed me and eventually my body revolted against all my efforts to control myself and I broke into a violent burst of the most agonizing tears.

I thought of my daughter, and I thought of the words of Allah which she quoted.

Were these not the words of the One true God? Why did it seem as though Allah was talking to me and only me?

Unable to contain myself any longer, I feared I might lose consciousness or become sick. Trying in vain to halt the violent trembling of my limbs, I wailed bitterly and feared I would pass away from this life of consciousness and may not be able to finish my prayers!

Weeping, to my Lord, I said: "Oh, Allah! Oh, the broken heart of mine! Oh, the pain and sufferings of this unholy world!"

"Oh, my daughter who was taken away from my life, and whose childish body was snatched away from my embrace, leaving my heart and my lap forever empty!

Oh, the anguish of the heart that find no respite from this imprisoned world!

Oh, Allah! Glory and praise be to You for allowing me see my child and hold her once more! Verily, you took her from me in order to keep her in Your Heaven so she may await me and save me from the terrible pit of fire!"

Breathing heavily, I cried out: "Oh, my dearest daughter! Your father will never sin again nor will he disobey his Lord!"

"Darling child! From this day onward, your father will become worthy of the Lord who cared for his child and forgave him due to the pain of grief which he endured!"

"Oh, my child and the reason for my heartbeat! Your father will shun all sins so he can be with you and your merciful Lord in heaven!

O to heaven where there is no pain or separation from loved ones!

My Lord! Indeed, You have tested me, by taking away my child, and leaving me broken hearted.

Oh, my Allah! You took away my only reason for living, as my daughter was my only wish for surviving! Yet you took her to save my soul and to save her from the shadows of my sins and darkness of my misguidance!

Oh, Lord of the Heavens! Do you see the broken pain that shatters my hearts into million pieces each day? Did you hear my wailings on the break of dawn when I called unto You and asked why You chose to make me suffer!?

My Lord! Whose love but Your love is real?!

Whose mercy but Your mercy is true?!

Whose promise but Your promise is everlasting and truthful!?

When You had kept my beloved daughter safe in Your hands and let her meet me and save me when I was drowning myself in the pits of flame which I earned by my own sins and the fire which I kindled by doing unjust actions committed in anger to Your decisions regarding my life's punishments!?"

As I called upon my Lord, I overheard the Imam speaking from his pulpit, and he uttered some calm words, and I immediately lend my ear to listen attentively;

The pious man said:

"We must always have firm belief in our hearts that each and everything that exists, whether we can see it, whether we cannot see it, we can perceive it or whether we cannot perceive it, whether it is within the realm of the human understanding or whether it is beyond our understanding, everything that exists is the creation of One Allah, and Allah alone had brought it into existence and Allah alone will keep it into existence and this existence will not terminate on its own accord, but it will terminate with the Will of One Allah."

When I heard the first sentence coming from the pious speaker's mouth, I was dumfounded with spiritual awakening, as I understood at once that Allah had taken away my child because it was not my property, rather my daughter belonged to the Maker of the Universe.

In my heart, I spoke to my daughter:

Oh, my daughter! Your god is most Merciful! Most Supreme! Most Just! Indeed, only His love is true and only His mercy is real and only His promises are eternal!

Oh, my daughter! You will find your father praying to his Allah and saving himself and all others around him from disobeying the most powerful, most merciful and most truthful God!

Oh, my daughter! I had loved you and I had lost you and my life had no worth after you were gone!

Oh, my daughter! It was not out of spite but rather a searing pain which wrecked my heart and tore my soul away and made me most angry at the decree of my Lord and caused me to rebel against him by drinking excessive wine in my foolishness! It was my lord who sent you to me to become my daughter, and made me your father! It was my Allah, the owner of the universe, Who made me love you and made you love me, and when He took you away, He merely took away what was His from the beginning!

But, oh, if man knew what waves of grief wrecked my heart! If they discerned what broke my soul and made me angry at my Lord and caused me to become a vile sinner as I waged a war against my Merciful Allah who only wanted to unite us in heaven and make me feel the pain of the hereafter so I may be encouraged to abandon my sinful ways! Therefore, I let go off my sinful ways and turned to my Lord in repentance and hope to save all those whose children are suffering!

The man went on speaking from the pulpit, explaining the greatness of Allah:

"Allah created us from no raw materials, or any raw substance. There was no substance which Allah

required to begin the creation of man or animals. Allah created from nothingness. The first human being was created from nothingness. Everything belongs to Allah. Everything is dependent on the Power of One Allah. Every cell in our body, every atom in the universe, is existing solely on the power of Allah. We must have faith that whatever happens, happens in the order of Allah."

Raising his voice, the pious speaker continued:

"The Koran (Final Testament) again and again, calls out, reminding us that this life in the world is a test: Verily! We have made that which is on earth as an adornment for it, in order that We may test them as to which of them are best in deeds. And Allah says, your sustenance, your wealth, your money, is not coming through your efforts, or your shops or your degrees. Your sustenance is coming to you from the heavens of Allah, according to the decree of Allah. By the Lord, Allah does not need you to lie, Allah does not need you to cheat, Allah does not need you deceive, and Allah does not need you to resort to illegal means to earn your money, and when the Caller of prayer calls out, and he announces, Allah is the Greatest, then he tries to convey the message that who else is there greater than Allah? No one! Allah alone is your goal. There are no partners to Him. Allah alone is your direction! Then the thought might occur that how can I please that Allah? How can I go to path of my Allah? What is the road to my Allah? What is medium to my Allah? It is through the path of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah! Allah Himself announced that if they open every door, if they come down from every road, I will never grant them my

Closeness, and I will never grant them entry to my Court, except that they do not come upon your road, O Muhammad. When the caller to prayer announces - come to prayer, twice, the first time, he calls on behalf of the One Allah, and the second time, he announces the call on behalf of the Last Messenger, announcing your prophet is also calling you, and it can be proven that in his last breath, the final Messenger continued repeating the importance of salaah. Then the Caller proceeds to call Believers to success. Again, the call assures us that coming to prayer is the real success, this is honor, this is dignity, but in this day, many people say, if I leave this business, or if I leave this shop, or if I leave this degree, then my sustenance will get affected. That is why it is said if at the height of arrogance, a laborer is paid monthly wages, and his employer calls him to office, once or twice or thrice, and if he does not reply to the calls or react to the summons, then the employer will immediately fire him, and swear on his mother and father and make him a subject of his wrath. However, did we consider how many times the Caller of prayers announced the prayer times? For twenty years, some people heard the Call and it fell on deaf ears. Thirty-six thousand five hundred times his Allah had called him, thirty-six thousand five hundred times that call had fallen onto deaf ears! Allah tells us come to Mosque, come to prayer, come to success! That is why the Prophet, one prayer, if it is not prayed on time, and even if it made up at a later time, then for missing it on its appointed time, if Allah does not forgive you, if Allah does not forgive you, then he will be put into the prison of the afterlife for 28 million years.

The religious speaker exclaimed with renewed vigor:

"A day is coming! A day coming! The Final Testament is calling out! Day! A day is coming on this earth, that pure woman whose not a hair was ever seen by a strange man, and that woman who danced on the stage, both will be gathered together and walk together; on this earth, the person who guarded his livelihood from illicit money, and the person who usurped wealth unjustly will walk together; on this earth, that ear which never listened to music and which ear was filled with the recitation of the Final Testament, and that ear which listened to revelry, they walk together; on this earth, that person who sold the knowledge of Religion in exchange for wealth, and the person who gave his life for the knowledge of Religion walk together; and in this earth, the one who was proud and arrogant and looked down upon others, and the one who was humble and pure, they walk together; and in this earth, the one who lowers his gaze, and the one who raises his gaze and looks at the unlawful, they walk together! What a day is coming, when there will be differentiation! An announcement will be made, today the sinners must move to one side. No one will be able to hide! No one will be able to run! No one will be able to oppose! No one will be left out! Each one, one by one, without exception, will be resurrected, in such condition as you were born: bare feet, bare headed, completely naked! No one will want to know another person on that Day! Even your close friend will not look to the needs of his close friend. Every human relationship will break down! That mother who carried you for nine months, and cried out with pain when she delivered you, she also will say you are not my son. That father will not want to know you, who toiled hours for your comfort, he also

will not want you! That husband will not want to know wife, and that wife will not want to know the husband. And that Day is coming! Angels will be lined up in rows, and the scale of Justice will be raised up, and Paradise will be brought Hellfire will be brought, and you may be thinking that Day is perhaps far away, and that is why you are in enjoyment, and that is why you are in revelry, but Allah says: No, no! The day is very near! The trumpet is already at the mouth. It is about to be blown! That day is very, very near! That day... I am sitting on this pulpit, I am speaking to you. You don't know what my object is. Maybe I want to be looked up as someone with a lot of knowledge. Maybe I am looking for your praises. Or maybe I am doing it for Allah's sake! You are listening. Why you are listening, I do not know! A Day is coming! A Day in coming when the Book of Deed will be thrown in front of you and you will be told, Read your own book of records . Look at your own past. Nothing can be erased no sin could be hidden . You make your own judgement. You decide for yourself. Did you please your Allah or did you displease your Allah? A Day when Justice cannot be bought! A Day when the oppressor cannot get the upper hand! A Day is coming of Justice! A Day when your mouths will be sealed and the fingers will start talking and the hands will start talking, and your thighs will start talking and your limbs will start talking and your toes will start talking, your body will start talking. You will tell your body: what is wrong with you? For your enjoyment, I have done all those wrong? Why have you become a witness against me? A Day when the person will be caught and the witness against him will be his own limbs. He will beseech his limbs: what is the matter

with you? And the limbs will say: That Allah who causes everything else to speak, is compelling us to speak, and we cannot remain silent. Hereafter is coming! It is a reality! The life of this world, the object of this world, the goal of this world, the perspective of this world, is one thing only: Koran calls out: To test you. Allah is testing us! Allah has created the heavens and Allah has created the earth. Allah has brought darkness into this world, and Allah had brought light into this world. One is the darkness of the night and one is the darkness of disbelief. One is the light of the suns and stars and the light of the day, and the other is the light of faith and piety and good deeds. Both are mentioned in the Koran, Allah has brought both things in this world in order to test. One is the darkness Allah brings about by the setting of the sun, and the other is darkness brought about the heart about Faith. By the rising of the sun of horizon of Faith on the heart, Allah causes darkness of ignorance to be dissipated from the heart. Allah is testing us! If Allah wanted, Allah could have made it daylight from now till the Day of Judgement, and the sun would not set. Tell them, O Muhammad, if we would have wanted, we would have made it daylight from now till the Last Day! Which force is going to cause the sun to set if Allah does not want it to set? Allah could have made it Light till the end of times! Allah could have given everyone the light of Faith and piety, and there would be no darkness if Allah wanted. But Allah does as He Wills. What is the meaning of the rising up and the decline of this world? What is the meaning behind the conditions and circumstances of this world? Allah is testing us! The Right side has power. The wrong side has some power. Allah has given

the devil power also. On the same Day, when Adam came in to this world, it was the same Day that the devil came into this world. The first day, Truth came into this world, and that same day, Falsehood came into this world. The Road is there. Either go in the road of Truth, and become the companion of Truth. Or go into the left and become a companion of the Falsehood. With Truth, is Light. With Falsehood is Darkness. But know this: Light does not prosper on its own. And Darkness does not prosper on its own. Allah had made this world a place of cause and effect. For the light of day, the reason is the rising of the sun. For Light to prosper, the cause is preaching. And for darkness to prosper in this world, the cause will be in preaching it. Both has marketing managers. This nation was made responsible to be the marketing managers of Truth and to preach the Truth. Truth was spread through the preaching of Truth. Darkness was spread through the preaching of Darkness. The devil swore an oath: I will come from the right, I will come from the left, I will come from the front, from the back, from above and from below, and I take them towards Your disobedience. Devil had his agents who are preaching evil, and there are those pious ones who are spreading the Truth, and the light of Truth will not be diminished on its own. When the preaching of Truth will cease, then only will the light of Truth diminish. About this nation, the followers of Prophet Muhammad, Allah has declared, We have made you a moderate nation, so that you may bear witness to humanity and the Messenger may bear witness to you. This nation was made the ambassador of the Religion of Peace. You are the ambassadors of Allah, and the ambassador of the Prophet! Darkness is spreading for

one reason only, and that is because it is being propagated. You are the representative of Allah on this earth, and you must preach with sincerity."

The speaker's passionate and heartfelt words reverberated through the prayer hall.

My reliance on the darkness of night was absolute, and I confided my sorrow to the solitude of my grief. I was suffering from a hysteric agitation but hearing these word made me feel some peace and comfort. What was it like to travel alone through life's dark wilderness and face the torrent of sorrow alone? I was a weary traveler, heading to the home of my Lord, where I hoped to unite with my deceased daughter. The burden and distress in my heart became bearable only after I beseeched to my Lord.

Oh, my Lord! I have loved You today for You have shown me what betide my child! My Allah! You have shown me Your mercy and You have shown me Your love!

Oh, Eternally Merciful, Most Forgiving God and Maker of my daughter and me! Put peace in the heart of those fathers and and mothers who had lost their child! Give them rest and joy an reunite them with their children in heaven! I am alive, and my daughter is dead, and for this, I must mourn. But, O Allah, help me bear this grief and save me from future misery

Oh, Lord of the heavens and sustainer of the two worlds! Accept my tear-stained repentance and the

bloodshot tears of my eyes which seek nothing but Your forgiveness and deserves naught but punishment from You!

I traversed known roads and crossed untrodden paths, but never did I find the smallest relief for my grief. I looked on to the dark and dreary world with tears streaming from my bereaved eyes, and I wondered how I, a pathetic sinner, would fare in the Day of Judgement, and I contemplated on how I would bear the distress of the journey to the hereafter? These thoughts deluged my mind, as I prayed to my God.

Oh, to the heavens that travels through the galaxy and the trillion stars that adore the sphere between the limitless universe under the supervision of a limitlessly powerful God! Oh, Allah, the King of all kings! Had any sin of mine earned Your displeasure? Then tear it from my heart and let me be grateful to You and repent to You!

Oh, Allah! Let me have the chance and blessing to be amongst the ones whom You chose over billions of Your bondsmen to worship You and pray to You and call out Your name!

Oh, the most merciful Allah! You had given me grief to bear and this had broken my heart with a pain that was beyond what pain can be imagined or felt by any man on earth! You had taken away the soul of my angelic daughter, who was the blood of my heart, the soul of my life and you had made me bury her and abandon her to the cold, dark and lonely graveyard amongst the dead and the old!

I was wealthy from infancy, and noble by birth, and the riches I possessed were but mines to dispense, for I did not earn this wealth by fraud or stealth, nor did I gain my esteem by treason or transgression. But I saw that this wealth and fame brought me no joy. My beauty brought me no happiness. The lavish praises from neighbors, and undying attention from youths could not give me a purpose in life.

My only child was dead and gone, and my world was empty and I was alone!

Oh, Allah! You know I have no one but You! Verily, man is deficient of intellect, and O how cannot they know that they do not have anyone but You.

My Allah! I cried in my heart. Surely You must understand me! Because You know what volumes of pain sears at my heart and how my sorrow had ambushed my defense! Verily, only You know the innermost feelings of my heart! My Lord, You know I do not seek to sin against You in anger nor do I resent Your Truth, and I do not drink wine to rebel against Your commands, but seek alcohol as a means to forget the pain that made my mind wrought with grief! I hope to blot out vestiges of this sadness!

The cluster leafage surrounded the grassy meadow whirled with the winter wind. The field was empty, and not a soul could be seen for as far as my eyes could see, and I momentarily rejoiced for this, because I had once more become overcome by a bout of maddening grief, and the merest thought of my deceased child made angry tears rush to my eyes. The blades of grass swayed

as though on its own motion, and I wept and spoke to my Lord:

Oh, my Allah! Forgiveness is what I only want from You, yet You and I know that of the all the mortals who tread upon Your earth, I least deserve Your clemency or pardon!

Oh, had I never been born and had I never felt these pains that wreck my soul away!

Let my prayers be heard by You, O Allah, and turn not away my last prayers for I have no one but You to implore to and none save You to beckon to my plea!

My follies are great, but what I have done out of my heartache and pain shall not be of any consequence to the Merciful Lord who controls the trillions of galaxies and the billions of stars! I am but a speck of clay in Your universe, so grant me Your Heaven!

My hearts is Yours, O my Allah! It has always been Yours and never belonged to anyone but You! Take my humble repentance and try and forgive this sinner who has no one but you!

Let us not misguide others nor be misguided ourselves!

Oh, how I wished Death would come in the form of a mystical wind that would carry me over land and ocean, and lay me gently down beside my daughter? But no; there was no respite to my sorrow, and no reprieve was forthcoming from the glaring skies. Had any mortal, me besides, tasted my cup of sorrow? I glanced morosely at the high ground beyond my house, and in the

moonlight, I could feel the proud forest-trees looking on without compassion. What lifeless things they were, devoid of human feelings and compassion! As I watched, sweeping sharp winds of an upcoming storm whipped the tree trunks into submission, and tore the gold and crimson leaves away to an unknown landscape beyond these hills. I looked on. The once proud trees had rested their boughs on the leaves-strewn ground, humbled and defeated. The forest convulsed beneath the power of the wind, but I had no power to forget my grief. With each gust of gale, my sorrow increased in my chest like a rising well. I wept, and prayed to my Allah, with the following words:

Oh, the Lord of my heart! Let us all reunite with our family members who are in Your heaven!

Have I anyone but You, O my Allah, that I can ask to give me anything? Oh, the merciful of the Most Merciful! You have shown mercy on one who least deserves Your mercy or forgiveness but implores you with the last hope left in his heart!

The pouring rain blotted out the streams of tears that flowed from my reddened eyes. I welcomed the clouds of thunder that swirled overhead, for they appeared to grieve my Fatimah along with me. The throbbing pain in my heart was more than I could bear and I prayed to Allah to grant me a swift death and rejoin me with my child, who now resided in the land of the dead.

Oh, thundering clouds and roaring winds! Oh, the blazing fires around us! What supreme power does your

**Creator hold? Oh, benign skies! Will not my Maker find
me fit to deserve his forgiveness?**

**Can you not feel the tremors in my heart, O callous
wind, when you blow incessant gale against my weeping
eyes?**

**O glaring sunlight, don't you see the tears staining my
pale cheeks?**

**Oh, birds of distant skies! Can you not hear my wailings
that shake even the mountain tops at each break of
dawn? When I recall the grief that wrecked my life, do
you then, O gentle dove, sing unto me a tune of sorrow?**

**The wild and cold rain poured on, and as the wind
roughened, I sobbed and sobbed, aimlessly moving
along a pathless way, hoping to walk with my reverie,
until all human thoughts were erased from my mind
and I continued to beseech to my Lord for Mercy.**

**Oh, the calm ground that stays steadfast for man to
tread upon! Do you not see the fear that shakes every
fiber of my being? Can you discern when it makes me
tremble and fall as I walk, as frightful thoughts about
my future and the hopelessness of this broken world
beset me?**

**Bear witness, oh stars and skies, and heavens and fire
and wind! Know that I had grieved and repented! Bear
witness to your Lord and implore Him to forgive me
and grant me another chance to worship Him and
spend the rest of however many days of my life I have**

**remaining in my Maker's remembrance and
righteousness!**

**Who shall beseech pardon for me? Oh, who possesses
the power to worship the Almighty? None can ever pray
to the Supreme Creator without His divine permission!**

**Oh, Allah, against whom I had sinned! Let not a day
descend upon which You are angry with me! Oh, I
would die a thousand times, and suffer in a thousand
ways rather than anger you again! For You are an
honorable Lord, and I know I must become honorable
in order to be loved by You! O let me never earn Your
displeasure! Seize my life away from this world if You
see me going astray!**

**Let not a day enter into my life in which Your pleasure
will be changed into anger toward me!**

**Ode to man that lives a lie and sleeps at night thinking
he will awake in the morning!**

**Ode to man that thinks he will eat and will not die
before his food gets digested!**

**Ode to man that sins and thinks his Lord will not seek
from him an eternal recompense!**

**A gray mist covered the city as I walked aimlessly over
the grassy hills, trying to forget the miserable and sad
memories from my head, weeping like a tortured
wounded animal. How can men live a doomed life where
they indulge and injure, or despair and die?**

Oh, Allah! Let me never be in Your displeasure even for the blinking of an eye!

My Allah! You had made me suffer, but I knew not it was because of my sins, and for this, I had hated You! My Lord, indeed, I had despised You and scorned all Your commandments! I rebelled against all Your scriptures, and I declared a war against you by drowning myself in sin and intoxicant in order to forget the pain you had caused me!

Oh, my own foolish heart! Had I known that my Lord had kept my child safe in heavens' arms, playing with other children of Paradise, where she was waiting to reunite with me, then I would have been most deeply repentant!

I wept and supplicated to my Lord thus: Oh, my Lord! Indeed, You love me! Upon uttering these words, I felt a rush of affection welling in my heart, and I succumbed to fresh tears and finally, when my weeping subsided, I continued to pray:

Oh, my Maker! Indeed, You love me and my daughter more than any human on earth or heaven can ever imagine!

Oh, what mystic healing have I found in Your love!

My Glorious Lord and King! My Comforter when all my heart and soul was broken and all my life was

**loveless and alone, and all my days were ripped away
with bitter wailings of anguish!**

**Oh, my wild heart that have finally found love and
solace in the worship of the Supreme and Benevolent
Lord!**

**Oh, the one who finally began to obey the
commandments of my Allah's scripture and words!**

**Oh, my Lord! I cried with renewed vigor. Hasten me
away from this world so I could see You and love you
like a desperate man for my heart is sour and pained
from the suffering and heartbreak of this world!**

**Oh, my Allah! For You, I love! For You I die! For You I
suffer and for You I try!**

**O Maker of the heavens and the earth! My tears are for
You! My laughter and joys are because of You! My pain
I endure for it is part of Your plan to better me! And my
end, I trust to You because You love me so ardently!**

**I raced up and down the river bank beside the town,
and looked at the dark water swirling in the void, and
the crystalline water glittered with the reflection of the
moon. I gazed up to heaven and in the endless sky, I saw
brilliant stars shining brightly. Millions of immensely
huge stars adorned this sky, and the Lord of the
Universe who created all these wonders chose to guide**

me unto His True path, although of all the mortals beneath these stars, I considered myself to be least worthy. When I was drowning in soul-wrenching grief, and did not think my daughter and I would ever be together again, I was guided to the Path of Light and Love and my Allah showed me the way to salvation. I hope other people who were suffering like me would also be saved from eternal damnation.

Oh, mankind! Come to your Allah and wage no more war against the only God who loves you!

Oh, men and women who walk upon the earth! Do not you know the love your Lord has for you?

Do you not know about the blessings your Lord has reserved for you? Yet, you sin against Him! Yet, you disobey Him! Yet, you hurt the feelings of your Mighty and Gracious Maker! Why, O people, why are you still beguiled?

With a forlorn mind, and a heart swelling with anticipation, I marched purposefully over the grassy hill that was gleaming from the clear sunlight that streamed from the glassy blue sky. I saw the roses and tulips drooping on the ground and suddenly the realization of how vast the world is dawned upon me, and I saw myself as the little insignificant thing which crawled upon this earth, but had no worth or value to anyone who lived. But despite my unworthiness, my Lord had guided me, and shown me the right path. I breathed

again, thinking that my life was not in vain, and in the next world, I would see my beloved daughter again! But oh, the terrible possibility entered my mind for a fraction of a second, and I wondered how I would have lived if my Allah had not guided me? I was a lost soul, wandering in the steeps of death and despair, drowning in wine and spirits, not knowing or caring about prayers and fasting. Had I died in that condition, surely, I would have been destroyed!

Now, I wished all the people in this town could know about the generosity of my Allah, the Most merciful!

In a loud voice, I shouted:

Oh, mankind! What has come over you! Are you blind with indignant parties and boisterous dances or have you become blinded with hate and angered by deception of this world?

Oh, people! Are you so mad with jealousy or hopeless with self loathe that you deny your Lord? Why do you shut your eyes and your hearts from Allah's love and continue to hate Him and deny Him while chasing after the fickle things and striving to please men and women who hate and despise you and will never help you especially in time of dire needs?

The throbbing pain in my heart did not cease, and I was afraid I would die in the agony of my woes. The storm of grief that raged in my body only became stronger, and I wondered if I would dissolve in the sadness of losing my darling daughter. But I turned my face to the star-decked skies and cried out:

**Oh, Benevolent Giver of life and death! Allow me a
portion of Your pity and though undeserving as I am,
grant me entry into Your paradise!**

**How beautiful was the power of imagination that for the
tiniest moment, let me think myself free of despair. Oh,
how the vestiges of my imaginary happiness sunk me
into a stupor of denial and I awoke, repeating the name
of my child, believing she is still alive and well!**

Oh, my Fatimah, though alone you lie,

Beneath these bed of roses,

I cannot believe you could die,

And my weeping never ceases!

The angels shading you here,

Hovering over my thoughts today,

Seeks the reason for my despair,

And wipes my tears away!

I saw within the thoughts of my head,

Your sight entering into my view.

And they raised you from the dead,

And you lived and oh, it was true!

This was real, and not a mere art!

My Fatimah was returned to me!

Lo! I clasped her to my heart,

And oh, what joy and cheers for me!
With tears of love, I clasped her near,
Close to my distressed heart,
Why do you weep, O father dear?
What grief you store in this heart?
My Fatimah was alive and moved!
I thought she in softness said:
Dearest father! You are loved,
Even from the land of the Dead!
I wept but my daughter said:
Do not grieve- for my God is kind!
I woke, and found my Fatimah gone
But only my trail of tears behind!
And when I awoke from sleep again,
I searched for my child, pained and anguished!
Feeling renewed hopes, I looked in vain-
I woke but O my Fatimah had vanished!

Upon waking from my dazed state, I resolved to adopt
the path to repentance and reformation.

Saying these lines, I began to pray to my Allah once
again.

Oh, my daughter! You were a blessing to me from my Allah! He gifted you unto me and he took you away! Know that He will reunite us when I am worthy of you and as sinless as you are, so we can stay together near the Heaven on our Lord with love and happiness for all eternity!

Oh, the heavens that is brightened with planets and upon which stars dance and glow in their respective galaxies! Do you know how great is your Maker who despite being so powerful and mighty still soothes the heart of an unworthy sinner like me?

Oh, the sun that burn into midday! And O evening stars that dwarf our sun with their size and sheen! Oh, the planets that rotate around the sister stars! Do you know how merciful your Controller and Maker is? Have you seen how supreme and sublime my Allah is that He has deemed it fitting to mend the broken pieced of a sinner's heart like me?

Oh, the stars that dazzle the darkest skies! And O winds that blow away the glitter of the day! O bright and gentle planets that rove aimlessly about the Milky Way! Hearken! I declare to you the greatness of your Lord!

Bemoaning my intricate imperfectness, I addressed my Lord thus: Art Thou not the Almighty Lord and Maker of the universe, so as to heal my broken heart and remove all the distress of my soul by Thy abundant Grace!

As though from heavens, a burst of calm rain began to pour over my bowed head, and with each drop of rain, my sorrow lessened and I could muster the strength to breathe again.

Then, I surveyed the emerald grasses and dancing flowers around me, and spoke with assurance.

Oh, the living and the dead! Have you known how merciful is your Creator?

Oh, let the world be gone to dust, and the earth be shattered to pieces, or the mountains be reduced to powder, or suns expire to infinity or my body dies or shrivels away! But never shall I disobey my Lord!

Let the world abscond, and its inhabitants reject me, and let the people revile me and the earthly fortunes rebel against me, but never shall I disobey the commandments of my most Merciful Lord!

How can I not cherish the love and mercy of my Allah, when man had hated me for my sinful past and the vile earth had accosted me for my imperfections, and the people hid and shied away from me due to my drunken state, but my Lord chose to forgive me and give me another chance at salvation!?

Why then should I care about the love or hate of men when my Lord had loved me more than my family,

friends and even parents? Why should the praise or criticism of man matter to me when Allah alone has promised to save me?

What can a mortal man on earth ever do to save me or grant me eternal bliss that I should care about their acceptance, seek their friendship or ponder over their love or hate?

Can all the people of this mankind gather together and bring my daughter back to me?

Will the powers of all humans be sufficient to bring me peace and happiness? Can they save me from death? Will these men and women be able to decide my Heaven or Hell for me? O why then should I care about their friendship, companionship or their society!?

No! Indeed, my love is only for those who are grateful enough to love their Creator and Maker! For only the righteous ones shall assist me in paving the path to eternal salvation!

Oh, my Allah! No devotee amongst the mankind can be more sincere in his penitence than I am in mine. I am the weakest of Your creation, and yet I seek from You eternal bliss and forgiveness!

Oh, mankind! Open your eyes, calm your heart and humble your pride and strive to see with the eyes of your heart how your Lord loves you!

I gazed forlornly at the beclouded sky and saw faint rays of golden sunlight peeking out. Perhaps there was hope for me. Maybe, my Lord will shower a rain of comfort on my heart. With renewed hope, I pledged myself to serve Allah with the following words:

**Oh, merciful Allah! This heart that I carry is Yours!
And I am Yours to take, Yours to guide, Yours to punish
or reward!**

The God of Fire

It was the post-civilization period of ancient Arabia, during the early period of 800 A.D. when wise men held territorial rights to expanses around the Mediterranean Sea.

Ascension after accession of just rulers dominated the region while military anarchy was unheard of along the continental shelf.

The Hejaz was a principate with Arabia as the metropole of its provinces, and Basra as a key city, known far and wide as the epitome of human civility and eminence.

The city of Basra was populated with eager knowledge enthusiasts and semi-obscure sages and scholars who were well aware how the advent of Islam had conventionally marked the beginning of classical antiquity civilization and success.

During this time, in the ripe year of 800 A.D, there lived two old men and retired citizens in the city.

One particular man was nearing the age of ninety years and he lived in the periphery of the sensational city of Basra.

As it happened, only miles away, directly across the city, lived another sage of similar manners and age. It was at the distance of ten miles from his humble abode, on the edge of a rugged cliff whose sides were steep, and encumbered with stony asperities, lived the other pious man engaged in religious exercises, but his faith had habituated him to practice a different mode of worship.

Although both men knew each other, they were adherents of differing faiths. They followed a different religion and called upon a separate deity, but one thing united the men- and made them akin to kindred spirit: they were devoted to their Lord.

They believed in different tenets, and they worshipped different gods and they followed different laws in the entirety of their life.

One man was known to be very pious and the greatest religious scholar in the whole country.

Throughout the kingdom, people from far and near would come to him to resolve their issues by his wisdom, blessings, or seek comfort in the intermediary of religious laws. This man acted most justly and most honorably towards all those who came to him and was benevolent towards all those people of the kingdom.

Scores of poor, destitute and needy men and women along with innumerable orphans and widows would knock on his door seeking advice and assistance, and he

would devote his time in helping them. For years, this man spent his days and his nights worshipping God and helping all those around him. In addition to being a worshipper of Allah (Allah, Arabic Allāh (“God”), the one and only God in Islam-Etymologically, the name Allah is a contraction of the Arabic al-Ilāh, “the God.” The name’s origin can be traced to the earliest Semitic writings in which the word for god was il, el, or eloah, the latter two used in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). Allah is the standard Arabic word for God and is used by Arabic-speaking Christians and Jews as well as by Muslims.)

This pious man was also the most learned and religious man in the city, with a brilliant mind that was filled with wisdom of religious knowledge that were gleaned ceremoniously from scriptural texts. This pious man possessed the wisdom of philosophy and the wisdom of age.

Regardless of race or creed, people from all walks of life would seek his company whenever they faced hardship, and they begged him to pray for them, and miraculously, whenever he prayed for them, the day's sun would not even descend but all their problems would be resolved.

This was the most honorable man of Basra, who all the people trusted, regardless of their faith or their Creed, irrespective of their race or class or their social standing.

The pious man acted justly towards everyone regardless of their power and their wealth.

Even when the most intelligent ones amongst them could not resolve an issue, the people of the city had no doubt that this pious man was going to be able to solve all parity, for no one had any doubt about the piety, goodness and unwavering faith of the man.

They often witnessed how he spent all his nights crying to Allah so profusely, that after the night's close, his long auspicious beard would become soaked with his tears.

This man was utterly noble and sinless, for he spent all his life from his youth to his old age in worshipping Allah throughout the night, and praying and kneeling in front of Allah's altar till sunrise, and fasting by abstaining from food and water throughout the days, and yet he considered himself the most unworthy of Allah's mercy. Verily, this pious man thought himself to be the most sinful of the sinners, for occasionally, his mind encountered fleeting thoughts of momentary joy and pride of being able to live an ascetic life, and for this, the man was doubly grieved, and blamed himself most severely for his guarded flaws.

He was zealously punctual in the offices of prayer, and in the performance of good deeds.

There were perhaps only few men in Basra, or indeed in the entire world, who were equally sincere in their faith, or were as sparing in their censures and restrictions, as this devout pious man.

Contemplating his unworthiness to himself, the man would often weep so ardently in the darkest hours of the night, that even the neighbors and beggars of the street would pity him.

A few sympathetic passersby would cry out: "Oh, pious man! Cease your weeping, for we are certain that your Allah has forgiven you. Indeed, we have known you since days of yore, and we have seen your sinless habits and long episodes of devout worship and charity. For pity's sake, have mercy on your soul, and do not destroy yourself by being inundated in volleys of bitter tears!"

When he heard these words, the man would break into fits of tears. Amidst torrents of helpless tears, he would retort, "Oh, how can you say this for certain? How do you know that my Allah loves me? How, indeed, how can you know if He does not dislike me or that He does not hate me? Oh, gullible man! How do you know that my heart is pure enough to dwell in the obeisance of the most pure and sublime Allah?"

And with these words, the man retreated to his abode near the city's edge, which was bounded by a rising scene of fields and orchards, but little could interest or distract him. The farthest verge of this precipice was miles above the flowing river. The view before him consisted of a transparent current, rippling majestically between deserts and sandy channels.

The edifice of his small abode was slight and airy and he remained engrossed in worship day and night.

One night, the man wept so desperately that the sound of his sobbing could be heard from afar. His crying became so pronounced, that an elderly woman who lived nearby approached his dwelling. She looked into his bare abode, and noticed the house had scant amenities, where the flooring was the rock, cleared of moss, and cautiously levelled, edged by a handful of

rough columns, and embellished with nothing but an undulating dome.

The woman told him: "Oh, old man! I have seen you all my life! I bear witness that indeed you are sinless in the eyes of Allah. Give yourself some respite and some reprieve."

"Old woman!" He cried. "How can I rest when my future is not written plainly before me, and the uncertainty of my fate has not been shown in front of me? How do I rest when I do not know if I will go to heaven or hell after my abrupt death? How do I know if my prayers and my tears that are shed at night are accepted by Allah? Oh, how can I be certain that my imploring is not disliked by my Sublime Allah? How can I ever know if I am worthy enough in the eyes of my Lord, to enter his Abode in the pristine Heaven? Oh, woman! Thousands and millions of devotees cry and pray unto Allah, from the remotest corner of the universe. Say, how do I know Allah will deem my prayers worthy to even respond to? How do I know that Allah listens when a vile old creature like me calls unto Him?"

The elderly woman could not muster any reply to the emotional outburst and glanced helplessly around the plain room. She realized that this pious worshipper of Allah lived in a sparsely furnished room, which was notably without seats, tables, or ornament of any kind.

**"Oh you worried soul!" Cried out the old woman,
"Comfort yourself and sometimes spare yourself some**

leniency, for indeed your Creator is oft forgiving and most merciful!"

He continued to address her in a sorrowful tone. "Old woman, do not you know the sadness and the anxiety of the slaves of Allah who do not know their own position in the eyes of their lord? Oh, woman! If you could give me a guarantee that I would be saved, and that I would go to heaven and that my Benevolent Creator Allah is pleased with me, then perhaps my tears would be subdued. But there's no surety in this life of what may happen in the hereafter. Verily, I have seen men who worshiped Allah all their life only to turn away from Allah in their final moments and they had become misguided and their end and death were in the greatest unsuccess and eternal downfall. Indeed, I too have seen men who worshiped idols and were disbelievers and pagans, all their life, but before they died, due to some hidden goodness in their hearts, their Allah had guided them and before seizing the last breath away from their souls, he allowed them to believe, and sent them to heaven! Oh, woman! What guarantee can you offer me that I will die with Faith in the One Allah? What surety can you give me that when I die, my Allah will be pleased with me pardon me and grant me admission into his paradise? Oh, what certainty can you proffer me that I will not die in the midst of an act of sin, or any action that may displease my Lord? Is there any guarantee that my last breath will leave my worthless body at a moment when I will be engrossed in an act of pious worship? What is the surety that I will not be agonized in my grave by the angels of torment? What

surety can you give me that Allah will love me, forgive me and will have mercy on me after I pass away from this life onto the next life?

What surety can anyone give me that I will live for one more day? Is there any guarantee I will survive till the morn? Has my next breath been assured from heaven, or could I expire this very instant? Oh, pray tell, how can I live, how can I laugh, and how can I sleep and eat, not knowing the certainty of my future? Oh, old woman! Only the fools of this world can sin in harmony, as it is only the fools and the ungrateful people of this world who can laugh during the day and sleep leisurely at night and woefully remain forgetful about their lord and disregard the uncertainty of their own future and ignore the reality of death and the hereafter! Oh, old woman! We came here to this world only to prepare for the eternal Hereafter, but the devil had misguided most men and women through lust, through desires, through greed, through vengeance, through anger, through hatred, through wars, and through ego. Oh, woman! What surety can you give me that the devil will not misguide me like he had misguided so many learned and intelligent and wise men before me? Oh, woman! I have seen pious and honorable men who were once most beloved to Allah but became ensnared by the mischievous devil and from being the best men in the world, they turned into the worst men in the world. I have seen religious people become irreligious, and verily I have seen worshipers of Allah become worshipers of the devil. I have seen good people turn bad, and I have seen bad people turn good. What surety is there for me of receiving heavenly benevolence and what promises have I of an eternal Bliss that I would dare to rest in a

peaceful slumber all night long or devour exotic cuisines throughout the day? Indeed, I have spent my entire life with the utterable fear of uncertainty in my heart, a terror which still grows within me. Oh, and verily it will linger in me till the day I die."

All those who knew the old man knew that for nearly the entire duration of the day, and into the lonely hours of the night, he remained in his small enclosure, unmolested by any human thought or sight, as he wept humbly and prayed, and in this enclave, nothing was there to obstruct or postpone his devotion to his Lord.

Thus, with these words, the pious old man reproached the woman and continued to spend his life and time away, crying and begging Allah for forgiveness and seeking penance for all his human flaws and mistakes he ever made. For this man, this temporal life of this world was very insignificant and like a fleeting dream, because they knew the richest man who lived would end up in the same shallow grave to lay in an eternal rest beside a poor peasant and the only parameter that would be set by diligent angels would be that of piety, as Allah had promised in the Glorious Quran, declaring in the first verse of Chapter Hujuraat: 'Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you!'

These were men of wisdom. This old man was among the men of understanding and was one of the men of learning. They were not fools, nor were they silly or childish. They were not slaves of human lust and they

were not slaves of their own desire. These religious men were not slave of greed or a slave of their own passion. They did not succumb to anger, hatred and unrighteous ego.

These pious figures chose to voluntarily secede from earthly commitments, and they resolutely obeyed all the commandments of Allah, but did not exact from the fellow city dwellers compliance with their example, for everything of value in this world, and all the indomitable kingdoms, and the treasure houses full of money and wealth and the power of the tyrants, and their fame and titles were meaningless and utterly counterfeit to them, because they knew nothing in this world was going to last forever. The unconquerable monarchs who sat high on their glass thrones did not intimidate them for the men of wisdom knew that these leaders were merely playing kings and queens in a cheap drama or play, and waged wars against one another to gain small conquests, but soon, their eyes will close forever, and they will realize that they had been actors playing a very temporary game, and now the Act was over and they would be returned to the dust, covered with cheap dirt, lying alone in a dark cold grave. Those indulgent leaders and monarchs had believed that the roles they were acting were real, and they thought themselves to be powerful and influential, but only after the advent of death, those mighty kings understood that they were nothing but an actor with a mask of monarch. Only after death will man understand that the power of this world was temporary and worthless. The fleeting moments of power or luxury they experienced in this world was just to play and act for a short period of time, which would be

unceremoniously taken away and nothing but the dust would remain. The ashes of past mighty empires lay in darkness, as their emperors lay forgotten in narrow and silent tombs. The wind of death swept over them fiercely and did not leave behind even a remnant of their glory. Only dust and ashes remained.

This pious man did not allow himself to get fooled by the temporariness of this world and by the transient power and crumbling Kingdoms of the world and the abominable lust of the impermanent world. He focused on the everlasting, eternal hereafter, which was the only real life for which he came to this world to prepare for.

This pious man's name was Hassan. He was extremely handsome during his youth but rather than indulging in the pursuit of wealth and lust, he spent his entire life in devotion to one God and prayers. Up till the ripe old age of ninety, this old man continued to resolutely worship the One Allah of Abraham.

He had earned a special status among the tiers of dervishes because he was blessed with the comradeship of 120 companions of the Blessed Prophet Muhammad (May Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him).

Despite his unique status, Hassan was God-fearing man who was always overwhelmed with the fear of death. So much did he grieve about his uncertain future that from the time of his youth, Hassan pledged to himself that he would ignore the desires and luxuries of this world and prepare only for the next world, and thereafter, he remained engrossed in worship and never again laughed - until death overtook him at an old age. Every minute

of his entire life, he constantly stayed in a state of utmost piety and purification in his solitary abode. The loneliness of his dwelling prevented him from being distracted during long hours of kneeling and praying. He considered this to be a temple of his Deity and did not seek the company of any established congregation to fulfill his obeisance to Allah.

Better known to his city-people as Hassan of Basra, he roamed in the loneliness of the desert and wept profusely to his Allah, and sought the intercession of the messenger of Allah and His prophets in the Hereafter.

Once, a man asked Hassan what he thought about some people who were criticizing him and finding faults with his statements.

To this, Hassan of Basra replied with humility. "I find myself full of fault," said he. "While I am searching for divine proximity, I cherish the desire for paradise. but both these attitudes are contradictory. Furthermore, I do not hope to be immune from the criticism of people. Not even Merciful Allah, not even the parents of saints, not the Prophets, not the Angels, and not the heaven nor hell, nor anyone in the universe has been spared by the tongue of people."

The sage Hassan knew that his work of righteousness and mercy was a priceless endeavor in which the fruits of the pious labor in this world would be in the care of the Almighty without doubt, who in His own good time,

would bring forth rewards greater than a hundred-fold to all those who persevered. These religious saints were aware that the very best of people sometimes are apt to become discouraged by the uncertainty of the hereafter, but those who had the very great privilege to be born of pious parents, and reared in Faith and Honor, would remain steadfast in the paths of piety and virtue. But, notwithstanding all their prayers, and all their cares, for the greatest part of his life, Hassan feared that he did not deserve the magnanimity of the Almighty Allah. He knew he had been endowed with such generosity and mercy from his Lord, that scarcely a day has passed in his life without him receiving some special mercy at the hand of his Deity. Now, Hassan wept all night long and sought forgiveness for his seeming ingratitude and thanked the Mighty Creator for pouring bountiful blessings on his undeserving soul. Contemplating on the boundless mercy of Allah, Hassan remained engrossed in constant and earnest prayers. He, as did the other wise men, knew that the human heart often seeks to deceive the worshipper, and oftentimes, religious and learned men suffered from weakness of the flesh or unrequited pride, and immediately suffered the consequences of being led captive at the will of the devil and became responsible for the commission of a crime which had brought punishment and infamy upon their unfortunate souls, and filled the rest of their earthly days with misery and disgrace.

Often, Hassan of Basra would exhort those around him to obey the one Allah, and called upon men and women to beseech Allah's mercy and forgiveness. One day,

some people approached Hassan and told him that those who embark on preaching people towards goodness should become morally purified themselves first, and become sinless themselves first.

To this reproach, Hassan replied. "The devil most ardently desires that the door of commanding righteousness and prohibiting evil be closed forever."

With these words, he continued in his mission to become pious and enjoin goodness.

Once, there was a severe drought in Iraq, and the people of Basra were starving. Children wailed due to excessive hunger, as the dry winds of coarse summer swirled around their stick-thin frames, shoving the arid dust into their sunken faces.

The drought was so severe and the famine was so menacing, that thousands and thousands of cattle died and the hapless residents were starving and dying from thirst, as not a drop of rain descended upon them for years.

The people had become restless and impatient. Children would cry and the mothers would weep in despair. There were no crops available in the entire country and even the stray animals were dying out of thirst and hunger.

The people of Iraq gathered together and joined arms in the midst of a field. Over two hundred-thousand men and women gathered on the outskirts of Basra and decided to seek advice from the elderly sage they knew as Hassan of Basra. They knew that this man was very

pious and his prayers were accepted by Allah. However, when the people arrived at his doorstep and entreated him to climb atop a mountain and supplicate the Heavens for rain, Hassan begged to be excused and remarked, "If you wish for rain, then expel me from this country."

He said this due to his extreme humility which caused him to believe that in all of Basra, none was more sinful and unworthy than himself. Although he was the most pious man in the continent, his humble demeanor made him believe he was the cause of the drought. Such was the level of humility in his heart that he considered himself to be sinful.

One afternoon, Hassan of Basra accompanied a funeral procession and joined the burial ceremony.

After the deceased had been placed beneath the damp earth, Hassan wept profusely and addressed those around him. "Oh, people! Do you not know that the end of this world and the beginning of the hereafter starts from this grave?

Why then do you love a world and cherish a life whose end is in the grave?

Oh, why do you love a world whose final destination is in a narrow, dark dusty grave?

Why do you not fear the eternal realm of the hereafter, the advent of which begins in the grave?

Oh, look at this mound of dust and cold soil. Hence shall be your end and your beginning.

An ordinary traveler once came to his abode and begged him for some advice. Hassan of Basra gave him three advices:

"One. Never enter into companionship with kings and rulers.

Two. Never reveal your secrets and your sins to anyone.

Three. Never listen to music.

The end result of all three of these acts ends most dangerously."

One day a man approached Hassan and asked him what causes the corruption of the people? To this, Hassan of Basra simply replied, "It is in the death of the heart."

The man asked, "What is the death of the heart?"

The pious man of Basra responded. "Having love of the world in it."

In this very same sun-scorched city of Basra, there lived a fire worshiper. He lived under the blazing desert sun and worshiped the fire for seventy years of his life.

Now he was in his death throes.

Hassan of Basra received news of this fire worshiper's plight and heard that he was about to pass away, so he hurried to meet him.

The pious man went to the fire worshiper and exhorted him to believe in the One God of Abraham.

Hassan said, "Oh, you fire worshiper! Do not leave this world without worshiping your Lord. Oh, you who have been worshiping the fire.

I beseech you not to leave this world without worshiping the One Allah of Adam and Abraham who created you, who fed you, who kept you safe, who kept you healthy, and gave you a long life?

Oh, fire worshiper! Forget the animosity that you have with Allah and forget about the anger that you have towards Allah. Leave all the pain aside, and leave all the hurt aside, leave all the anger aside. Since death is so close, believe in the Allah that you know in your heart is real".

The fire worshiper's face had darkened upon hearing Hassan's words, and his face, which had turned black due to the years he spent facing the fire and worshiping it, now showed signs of displeasure.

The pious man again begged him to abandon fire worship and become a believer and a Muslim. "Accept the true faith of Allah and His Messenger," the religious man requested. "Perhaps Allah will have mercy on you."

The fire worshiper listened to Hassan of Basra, and then replied. "There have been three things that turned me away from Islam and Muslim. Number one,

according to the Muslims, the world is considered to be a very evil temporary and irrelevant place, and yet, they all remain busy in its pursuit, and vie with one another to receive greater portions of earthly pleasures, whereas their religion teaches them to let go of this worldly pursuit of wealth and power. Clearly the pursuit of worldly luxuries goes against what their religion teaches them, because the Islamic religion teaches them to give charity and become pious, and practice abstinence and be god-fearing, and yet they do not follow the rules of their faith. Number two, Muslims believe that death is true and inevitable, but they do not make preparations for it. They do not do good deeds as much as they should do, had they really believed in the indisputable truth of it. Number three, Muslims claim the vision of Allah is always on them, and they insist God can see and hear everything they do or say, and still, they roam freely on Earth and constantly act in conflict to His commandments."

The pious man listened patiently to the grievances and then replied to the fire worshiper, "Your words are conclusive, and the three things you mentioned are indeed the ideal parameter which all faithful should follow, and it is a sign of those who recognize the truth. Verily, the true believer acts according to the three points you raised, but do tell me what have you gained by destroying your life in fire worship?"

The fire worshiper did not speak at once, so Hassan of Basra continued to reason with him.

"I believe in the One Allah, and testified in the unity and sovereignty of the Creator of the universe, and you who have worshiped the fire for seventy years- if we both were to die now, and fell into a pit of hellfire, the savage flame will burn both of us equally, not caring at all that you worshiped it for the entire duration of your life. However, my Allah has the power of preventing the fire from burning me just as he prevented the fire from burning the Prophet Abraham. This is because my Allah is the Lord of the fire and the creator of everything in between. The fire is an irrelevant creation of Allah, and has no power to burn. The water, likewise, has no power to extinguish the flame except with the Will of Allah. Nothing on Earth has any power except through the commandment of my Allah."

As he spoke, Hassan of Basra became emotional and in a desperate attempt to prove to the fire worshiper that the god of Abraham was real, and that the creator of the heavens and earth was the One All-Powerful Allah, the pious man went nearer to the dying pagan man and asked him once more to believe in Allah.

The fire worshiper was not a man to be easily coerced or motivated, so he challenged Hassan of Basra with these words. "What proof do you have that Your Allah is real?"

To this question, the pious man replied. "Oh, you intelligent fire worshiper! Did you never feel the presence of your creator? Have you not witnessed how many millions of times your lord had saved you? Did

not you notice how many times in your life you had been almost run over by a driver or carriage? How many a times had you almost slipped and fell? How many a times had you gotten deathly sick? How many a times had you nearly fell to your annihilation or slipped from a cliff or choked on meals?

How many a times had you been saved? Had it not been the One Allah, your and my Creator who saved you every single time? How can an intelligent man like you believe in coincidences after coincidence and still not believe in your own Creator?"

To this line of reasonings, the fire worshiper could not come up with any reply.

Hassan of Basra continued his admonishment: "Oh, you old man! How long will you deny your lord? How long will you fight him? How long will you be angry at him? Oh, my fellow countryman! Have you not despised your creator and your maker long enough? Have you not been denying Your Allah long enough? Have you no mercy and love for the god who created you and loved you more than all else? Oh, old man! Have you no love or gratefulness for the lord who fed you, clothed you and kept you in good health and let you attain old age?"

Upon hearing this, the fire worshiper insisted that he does not wish to change his old ways and did not desire to relinquish his past beliefs.

The pious man then cried out! "Oh, my unfortunate neighbor! I beg you to let go off the anger and forget the vengeance and victimizations of your own personal anger! Oh, my good, fellow man! Your Allah can never hate you and it is only you who hate him! Your Maker can never hate you the way a mother cannot hate a child, because your Allah has created you. Yet, you have the audacity to deny him but know in your heart that your Allah will never stop loving you!"

The old fire worshiper then replied, "I spent my entire life in this place worshiping fire, for I believed it had power to heal and burn. My forefathers who I loved and respected also worshiped the fire you see before me."

The pious man interrupted him and implored:

"Oh, old man! Have you not spent your entire life loving fellow humans who will love you today and might hate you tomorrow? Yet you love them and put your anger on Allah by denying His existence? Tell me truly, have you never felt His presence in your heart at the middle of the night? Has not many, many of your wishes gotten accepted by the Benevolence of Allah? Was it not your Allah, your maker and owner who fulfilled most of your wishes? How then can you deny your Allah? How then could you hate Him? How then could you call yourself decent and merciful and hurt your Allah by denying him? Why, oh neighbor, why do you vent your frustration and anger on Allah instead of the humans who caused you pain?"

As Hassan of Basra entreated the fire worshiper to accept the true God of Abraham as his deity, the old man was steadily getting more and more ill, and the onlookers knew that the fire worshiper had only a handful of moments remaining on this earthly abode.

Wishing to convince the dying man of the truthfulness of Allah, Hassan of Basra then said: "Oh, my old friend! Indeed, you know this more than me that your Allah is true!

Oh, old man! Before you die, why keep any hate in your heart toward the One who made you? Have you not fought him long enough? Have you not hated your Creator long enough? Have you not vented your anger on Him long enough? Shall you let your anger and vengeance cause you to die in arrogance and ungrateful hatred towards the One being who loves you most sincerely? Will you leave this wretched world by loving the forgetful humans and denying the everlasting loving creator of your soul! Oh, my good man, torture your soul no more with the fire of your hate and anger towards your creator! Oh, old dying man! What use is there to torture your soul and force it to hate and deny the very thing that your heart knows is true?"

Suddenly, the fire worshiper cried out, "Oh, pious man! Why do you seek to convince me so desperately to become a believer of One Allah? What will you gain by this?"

"I am an old man, and almost as old as you." Hassan of Basra replied. "I am not a saint, but a sinner. A transgressor. I am selfish and impatient. I consider myself greedy like a child and silly like a youngster!"
The pious man paused and spoke. **"But I have seen my Allah's love and I have witnessed His sheer kindness! Oh, old man! I know my lord loves me! Oh, old man! I saw how my Allah fed me and saved me from calamities millions of times! Oh, old man! I was a weak youngster but when my lord saved me and fed me and clothed me, day by day, night by night, I witnessed His decrees and miracles and then my heart became soft! Oh, old man! Do you want me to number the times my lord granted my wishes? Do you want me to count the times He saved me from every kind of harm be they little or big! Oh, my old friend! My god loved me and I had loved him back! Oh, old man! When I was young and my heart had been broken by humans, it was my lord who gave me the strength to survive! Yes, it was my lord who saved me! It was my lord who gave me hope and love in a very dark and loveless world!"**

Then lowering his voice slightly, the pious man murmured, "Forgive me, old fire worshiping man, if I appear to exhort you maddeningly and speak incoherently! It is only because I have known my god as he ought to be known!"

"Is this the reason why you have such zeal?"
Questioned he fire worshiper.

The pious man replied at once. "How can you expect me to be calm when I tell you about my Allah! How can I not be encumbered with joy when talking of my Creator who saved me and loved me!

Oh, old man! One day you will realize that you have no one but God! No love but His love, and no loyalty but His loyalty."

"Does this Almighty god not frighten you?" Asked the fire worshiper. "Are you not afraid that your god will destroy you?"

Hassan of Basra responded kindly. "I know that if I would disobey him, my Allah would still save me! If I denied Him, my Allah would still feed me and clothe me! If I cursed Him, he would still keep his door of repentance open for me!

Then think of this- if and when I love Him, what rewards will that Allah store for me?

If I glorify His name, He won't let anything happen to me!

Verily I have faith.

No man can harm me because my Allah will protect me!

No animal can bite me because my Allah will save me!

No tsunami can drown me because my lord will save me.

No hurricane can move me because my Creator would save me!

No fire can burn me because my Allah, my Creator, my Maker, the god of Adam and Abraham will save me!"
Saying these words, the pious man flew into a fit of emotional sobbing and seeing the fire burn in front of him he plunged both his hands inside the raging burning fire.

To the horror and utter shock of everyone, the pious man's hand was not being burnt by the fire at all.

It took a while for himself to realize that the fire was not being able to burn him or touch his skin! He raised his face eagerly to the heavens and cried out:

"Oh, Allah! Oh, my lord! Of Master of heavens! Will anyone love me more than You? Is there anyone more mightier and more merciful than you?

Is there any being more true and real than You?"

Saying these words in amazement, Hassan of Basra held his hand deeper and deeper into the fire and the raging flames couldn't burn an inch of his skin. It neither burnt nor hurt nor heated his skin or flesh.

Seeing this miracle, the old fire worshiper became shocked and gazed thunderstruck at the pious religious man.

Now, he was even more desperate to not let the dying man take his last breath without worshiping and believing in the one true creator of the heavens and the Earth. So, in order to prove that the fire had no power,

the religious man had uttered the name of Allah most ardently, and saying the name of Allah, he had plunged his into the blazing fireplace.

Gazing earnestly at the heavens, Hassan of Basra kept his hand in the flame and then facing the heavens, he beseeched Allah for forgiveness and mercy. For a long time, he kept his hand in the fire and miraculously, the fiery flames did not have any effect on him, and nor did it scar or injure him in the least. Hassan then removed his hand from inside the fireplace and showed the fire worshiper that it was not remotely burnt. His skin was pristine smooth healthy and intact.

"You look surprised to see that the fire has not the power of affecting or harming me! Tell me truly, has the fire you worship as god, ever saved you from such calamity? Has your lord ever protected you like this? Only the One Allah has power over everything in the heavens and the earth." Hassan of Basra exclaimed. "At a young age, when my spirit was broken, and my body was in poor health, and I was living without a friend, my Allah graciously inclined the heart of all the city dwellers towards me, and guided my own heart into the paths of righteousness. I knew that this was an extraordinary interposition of Allah in my favor and in return, I loved and trusted my Allah.

At times when I least expected it, and least deserved it, my Allah, in tender compassion, kept a watchful eye over me; proving to my wretched heart, that, no matter

how unworthy I am, my Maker will always love and cherish me.

The stronger your faith is in Allah, the more He will bring you closer to Him until He is with you everywhere you go and in everything you do!"

"Is your Allah real? Is he with you now?" Asked the fire worshiper.

The pious man replied: "Yes, verily, my god is real. My Allah is here with me now and forever!

The fire has no power! The water has no power. The wind has no power. The earth has no power, and no creation has any power except for the power of my Allah! The universe has no power.

It is my Allah who is most powerful and most forgiving and most merciful! It is He who never stops loving never stops forgiving!"

Hassan of Basra was more than a mere saint; he was a devout preacher and now sought to save the old fire worshiper from the fire of hell. His agreeable manner impressed the dying man who agreed to listen to his advice. To the expostulations of his peers, the pious man seldom gave any reply or rebuke and only when he designed to be communicative, he spoke in small words and implored with utmost humility and now addressing the dying man, he called out:

"Oh, worshiper of fire! Will you not stop the worshipping of a creation of God and turn in submission to the god who created the fire? Then make a covenant with me and give me your hand and let me guide you back to the Allah who has been waiting for you all your life. That Allah who has been waiting for your return like a mother who waits a child's return with love and anticipation when the child gets lost. Hold my hand and be steadfast and hurt your Allah no more! Hold my hand and let Allah know that you love Him and accept Him as your Maker and as your Guardian and friend, and ascribe no partners unto Him."

Witnessing this miracle had an astounding effect on the fire worshiper, and his heart opened up to the light of true Faith. The aura of guidance had penetrated his heart as he finally witnessed the power of Allah first hand.

With acquiescence, he finally believed in the god of Moses, the god of Abraham, the god of Adam, and the One Creator of the heavens and the Earth. Now, the fire worshiper was able to place his Faith on the All-Mighty Allah, and his heart has heart swelled up in recognition of his only creator.

In his newly found ardor, the fire worshiper addressed Hassan in earnestness. "I have worshiped the fire for 70 years. What can I achieve in the last few moments that remains of my life?"

The pious man replied in one small sentence. "Become a Muslim, and become a believer in Allah, the one Creator of the universe."

Then the fire worshiper asked, "What will happen to me if I believe in Allah and if I believe in His prophets?"

Upon hearing this, the pious man replied at once. "Verily, Allah will forgive you, and erase away all your worst sins. Allah who is the creator of the heavens and the Earth will admit you into eternal Bliss and Paradise, a paradise which has a beginning but no end and in that eternal abode, you will be able to witness the reality of the Hereafter, and the truth of Allah's Justice, as you have now seen the power of Allah in front of your own eyes."

The fire worshiper said, "Since I am already dying, and having nothing more to lose or gain, what proof and what evidence do you have for me that will reassure me that my faith in Allah will be accepted? How can I know that Allah will forgive me or accept me?" The pagan man heaved a great sigh, and exclaimed, "No! Indeed, I will not believe you and I will not believe in your Allah and His promise, for I have been a sinner all my life, and now how can your Allah be so great as to forgive all my past sins and accept me in His paradise when I worshiped a vile object like fire, and only accepted His Oneness in the last few seconds before my death."

Upon this, the pious man looked relieved. "Oh, old man!" He shouted joyfully at the former fire worshiper. "Do you know how happy it makes your Allah to see you love Him and turn back to him after such long years of heedlessness?"

No words inside books, no poetry in history, and no arts of the earth, can depict or visualize or put into words the love your lord will have for you!

No man can understand and no human can comprehend how eagerly your Allah awaits your love and friendship!"

"But I am merely a sinner," cried the dying man, "for I have worshiped unpleasant things such as flames."

Hassan of Basra immediately answered. "Oh, that you would know what Allah says about sinners! My generous and kind Allah had announced: 'If the sinners knew of how much love and how much affection and compassion I had for them, their joy would be such that their hearts would burst in happiness and the limbs of their bodies would get separated and they would die from the sheer weight of happiness. And if this is the love I have in Me towards those who sin and disobey Me, then think about how much love an anticipation and affection do I have for those who obey and worship Me?"

Hearing these words, the old dying man felt as though a command had been laid upon him, which he had delayed to act on and now he felt as though the certain

period of hesitation and reluctance had passed. He was no longer destined to worship fire and his devotion would now be dutifully assigned to the One Allah, the god of Abraham. And the old man only hoped that he would never have to face the consequence of his disobedience to Allah, and he hoped he would never have to endure the penalty of worshipping fire for seventy years. He expressed his fears to the pious man and said, "In this abode, removed from temptation, I am now able to review with bitter anguish the folly of my misspent life, and the years I spent in worshipping fire, believing it could save me. Now, I trust the Allah who agrees to graciously pardon and forgive, even the vilest of His creatures, will show mercy on my old soul."

Wallowing in self-premonition, the fire worshiper told the pious man to write a document of assurance for him. "Oh, religious man," he cried. "Dictate a message that will serve as a guarantee for me, and state clearly that if I embrace Islam, Allah will forgive me."

The pious man obliged, and wrote the document stating that the dying man will be redeemed if he accepted Allah as his Lord and Islam as his religion, and then he presented it to the fire worshiper.

The fire worshiper took the document in his hand and glanced at it serenely, but suddenly he exclaimed, "This is not enough! I must be certain this paper will suffice for my eternal salvation. Hence, take it back and have all the pious saints of Basra and Iraq endorse it with their signatures. Make them all sign under the

document as a proof and witness that when I die, Allah will forgive me and the Allah who created the heavens and earth will admit me into His paradise. Have all the pious and religious men stamp their signatures below the statement that if I accept Islam, Allah will not punish me for my sins and for my disobedience towards him for 70 years."

Desiring to respect his wishes, Hassan of Basra agreed and he immediately ran to the abodes of all the pious saints of Basra, and one by one, collected all their signature in the large document and brought it back to the fire worshiper. He then deposited the signed and verified document to the dying man and showed him how all the saints of Basra added their signature below the statement of assurance.

This time, the dying fire worshiper became so happy that he turned to the pious man and said, "Oh, Hassan! When I die, give me the burial shower and bury me with your own hands. And before you place me inside the coffin, and before the nails of the coffin are grounded, place this document in my dead hand, so that I have proof of my faith in Islam when I meet Allah. After my death, if your Allah's religion is true, then I will present this paper to Allah and His angels, and show them the proof of my Faith." Saying these words, the fire worshiper turned his face towards the heaven and announced, "I bear witness that there is no God but one Allah the creator of Adam and Eve, and I bear witness that Moses is a prophet of Allah, and Jesus is a

prophet of Allah, and Muhammad is the last messenger and prophet of Allah."

His voice and gestures were in tranquil unison, as he prepared to meet his creator and maker, the One Allah of Abraham, a deity he had not known until a day ago, but whose existence he felt assuredly as the daily ascent of the morning sun.

The former fire-worshiper now was an epitome of forbearance and humility, and this unique conduct secured the esteem of all those who had come to pay him their respects.

Uttering the declaration of Faith and announcing his Shahada in the presence of the pious man of Basra, the old fire worshiper died, and his last will was carried out dutifully by the saint Hassan.

After the burial night, Hassan of Basra returned home, overwhelmed by worry and sadness. He became so agitated that he could not control his tears all day and all night and remained awake, tossing and turning agitatedly, and could not sleep any longer.

The pious man borrowed a horse from his friends and went away from the city center, hoping to find some respite in another place.

For the remainder of the dark night, he kept crying, and said to himself, "Oh, my poor wretched self! Being

a worthless creature immersed in sin, how could I have written a guarantee of forgiveness to another man?"

Over and over, the pious man cried out the same words, "Oh, what a sinner I am, engrossed in heedlessness, and yet how could a sinner like me give guarantee of Allah's forgiveness to a dying man and how could I dare do that without the permission of Allah Himself?"

The pious man roamed aimlessly as he rode on the back of his horse, and passed through the downtrodden stormy roadside, farther and farther away from his city while Dawn broke and soon after daylight started flooding across the vastness of the country, when in his exhaustion, he fell into a sudden state of distressful stupor, and his eyelids drooped and his sight became blurred momentarily.

In this hazy moment, he saw a mystic vision as clearly as it was midday beneath the desert sun.

Before him, the dead fire worshiper was riding a golden carriage drawn by hundreds of royal horses, in the midst of a grandeur palatial garden in Heaven. The former fire worshiper was an old man while dying, but he now appeared handsome and youthful, and was bedecked in the finest attires and wore such a beautiful garment that the sheen of the fabric could be visible from miles away.

The dead former fire worshiper was surrounded by attendants who rode on gold horses and chariots and led him directly to Hassan. The pious man now saw that the former fire worshiper was wearing an expensive bejeweled crown which was so brilliantly illuminated, that the entire surrounding area was brightened by it.

Seeing this amazing scene, the pious man called out, "Oh, you deceased old man! How is it that you attained such a lofty position, look so youthful and in such luxury and comfort after death? Tell me, how is it that you are in Paradise, and I can see you in front of me."

To his earnest query, the former fire worshiper replied, "Oh, you pious man! Allah forgave all my sins by His sheer mercy, and I can never truly describe to you the unlimited bounties which Allah had bestowed upon me."

The deceased man then paused, and addressed Hassan directly. "I wanted to tell you that I am doing well in Allah's heaven and you no longer have to bear any responsibility for my future. Verily, the promise of your Allah is true and indeed the guarantee of your document was valid. Truly, your Allah has blessed me so much that I never thought it was possible. Allah has forgiven me and granted me the highest and loftiest position in eternal Paradise. Here, take this now." The former fire worshiper produced the signed document and held it out to Hassan of Basra. "You may take this document now. I have no need for this document of yours, and hence, wish to return it." Thus, saying, the

deceased man handed over the document to the pious man who was still perched on his horse.

This movement jolted him to an alert state and suddenly, the pious man woke up from the vision. His eyesight was clear, and the dead man was there no longer . Now he widened his eyes and gazed at his hands in utter disbelief. In his palm was the signed document, rolled neatly into a thick parchment.

A wild maddening impatience struck his mind while he struggled with his fears and thoughts. Finally he mustered enough strength by Opening the document rolled in his hand , the pious man was astonished to see that it was the exact document that he had signed and also saw the collected signatures of all the other pious men beside it confirming that this was the original parchment that was buried with the dead man.

The pious man's heart throbbed as he trembled in awe at this miracle of Allah.

How could the document buried six feet deep miles away across the fury desert and sea be given to him by a dead person who came and disappeared without any trace?

His mind was thundering with the strangest of the strangest fear.

Had Allah forgiven the man and given him heaven and then let him come down to earth to hand back this document to him? Was the heaven so real and the after life so true? And was this worldly life of a few counted

days which men fought over so violently, so false and so fleeting?

The stupor of shock left him motionless and almost senseless after his body had ceased to tremble with sobs.

That the power of Allah and the truth of His paradise and the promise of Allah's forgiveness was beyond the imagination of human minds and beyond the reach of human understanding.

It was now nearly mid day and the burning sun was becoming stronger. But the feeling of shock which had seized him into a stupor of anticipation horrified him and he stayed sitting on his horse with the stillness of a statue.

The sun was burning but his heart was drowning in a despair so beyond anything he felt before, the coldness and the dreary fear stopped him from summoning up the courage to proceed any further.

The pious man trembled and shuddered as he finally looked up toward the heaven and thanked Allah in his heart, and almost soon after, began to cry and weep profusely.

He murmured fervently, "Oh, my Allah! You had verily said that You do not need a reason to do certain things.

You do not need an excuse to forgive.

You do not need an excuse to shower mercy on Your unworthy creation.

Verily, You are the Mighty and Wise!

Oh, Allah, You act without a reason, and You act without a cause and You bestow Boon and Mercy on people without any return.

I, along with the rest of Your creation is dependent on Your mercy.

He faltered and then he became terrified about his own future with Allah. He thought he could no longer find any strength to hope. The misery of the unknown future and the terrible guilt stunned his mind.

He again tried to muster up a strength to pray and the words came out in a harsh whispers as if the last words of a dying man.

My Allah! Verily, You have forgiven a man merely for uttering one statement although he had worshiped the fire, dishonoring You and disobeyed You for 70 years! Will you not forgive a man who has worshiped you for more than 70 years?"

Hassan of Basra wept vigorously as he repeated those words: "Oh, my Allah! Will not You show mercy on an undeserving creature like myself, who has been calling unto You day and night for the past seventy years? Will You not admit him into Your eternal Heaven? Will I not be spared from the callus torment of the Hell fire too? Will not my soul be saved by Your resolute Magnanimity?"

Tears flooded his eyes and streamed through his beard, as the pious man continued to weep, his body convulsing as though in pain.

My Lord ! My Creator! Look at my heart, for no one but You knows the hearts of man better! For my heart has been true to no one but You!

Unable to cease crying, he fell from his horse on his knees in the burning desert sand and facing the Temple of Abraham and cried unto his Lord , saying: Oh, my Lord! My Allah! Indeed, Thou has kept Thy promise! Indeed, Thine promise is true. Indeed, Thy words are true. I bear witness that indeed Thy religion is true. Indeed, the afterlife of the hereafter is true and the Your promise of life beyond life is truer than this temporary world form which death eventually awakes us .Indeed, this world is the life of mockery and play and the indulgence of earthy pleasures are but a jest. Indeed, this world is for an extremely short period of time.

Oh, Allah! Oh, Creator of Abraham and Adam and Jesus! Indeed, Your promise is more true than the heart that beats in my body and more real than the oxygen that we breathe and more true than the unseen wind

that sweeps around me and more true than the things I touch, see or feel and Your words are more true than the Sun that rises over us, and more real than the moon which steadily wax and wane."

Saying these words, the pious man again dropped on his knees and bowed his head until his forehead touched the ground burning desert and he sobbed most bitterly to his Lord and sought forgiveness to his Maker and begged for reprieve from the Creator of his body and soul.

In his prayers, he addressed Allah as such:

"Alas Oh, Lord! Oh, my Maker!

Oh, Allah! Oh, My Merciful Lord and Sustainer! Oh, Creator of the Angels, Prophets and Humans! Indeed, you have forgiven a man who had sinned against You, and who had disobeyed You all his life, and have you forgiven one who has violated Your covenant and status of being worshiped by worshiping articles and other insignificant beings beside You.

Yet, oh, Merciful Lord, You have forgiven a man who had broken every law that You made and every commandment that You stipulated. You have forgiven a man who had sinned for the entirety of his life. But we are naught to question Your supreme command.

You have forgiven a man who never called unto You until the very last moment of his life. you have forgiven a man who had broken Your right as the Deity, and as the Creator and who worshiped a vile thing like fire, and took away Your right to be worshiped.

But You have forgiven him nonetheless, oh Lord! You have forgiven a man who sinned unceasingly for 70 years, day and night, and You welcomed him into Your paradise and forgiven all his sins and forgotten about all his past." Some passersby who saw the pitiable state of the pious man thought he was a fanatic and a dreamer, but even they could not deny their veneration towards his spiritual state and his piety. Hassan of Basra was known for unshakable candor and invariable integrity. His own belief of rectitude was the foundation of his unending prayers and unceasing prayers.

Whenever he recalled the circumstance of the demise of the former worshiper of fire, Hassan of Basra heaved a grief-stricken sigh, and sat on the cold, hard ground. Even in his utter devastation, his deportment was kind. He had prayed earnestly for the guidance of the pagan man, and now was relieved that the man had been saved from the eternal fire of hell, and this was evident on his face. Still, a lingering sadness was spread over his features, as he called his beloved deity every now and again with the following words:

"Oh, Allah, the Lord of my soul!

Oh, Lord of the heavens and earth!

Oh, Creator of this beating heart of mine! Will Thou not forgive a man who has worshipped you and cried unto you and prayed to you for seventy years?

Oh, Allah! Will Thou not give me the sanctity of Thy forgiveness?

Oh, my Allah! Will you not give me a proof of that forgiveness when I have worshipped Thee for 70 years, every lingering day and every fleeting night?

Oh, Lord of the seven heavens! Will Thou not forgive the sinner who has spent his youth, his middle age and his old age in your service- the unworthy fool whose hair has turned from black to white worshipping you, whose skin has become supple to wrinkled while worshipping You and who's back had become bent from upright all while worshipping no one but You, calling unto you, praying unto you, kneeling in front of you and asking for your forgiveness?

Oh, Lord of the sinners that has forgiven a man who had sinned against you for 70 years! Will Thou not forgive a man who had cried unto you and worshiped you for 70 years?"

He sought the certainty of the hereafter, but could not be certain of his own salvation, and this dilemma caused him a sadness that constantly attacked his mind. Often, deep sighs, and even volleys of tears escaped him as he contemplated on the wonders of the world with the following words.

"Oh, Lord of Abraham! Will Thou not give me surety of Thy forgiveness, and certainty of Thy clemency?

Will not Thou give me proof of my forgiveness?

Oh, Allah! Will not Thou give me a promise of that celestial pardon and let my final moments be in

worshiping Thee, the Supreme Creator, so that I may spend my final act in worship, whilst in a state of pristine purity, all the while, trusting and believing in Thee."

His passionate pleas to his Lord caused calmness to descend on his heart. No longer had he the agitated aura of sternness or discontent on his expression.

With contentment in his heart, Hassan of Basra made peace with his Maker with the following words: "I have hopes on Your Clemency, and my faith is founded on the boundless mercies of my Allah and Creator, who has watched over me from earliest childhood, and encompassed me with His love and protecting care. My Allah! Your mercy has followed me to every place I have traversed and when in my delusions, I was ready to give up all for lost, in hopelessness and despair, You, my Allah, returned my soul to the Truth with Your kindness by showering me with blessings and mercy! My soul and body belies all else which distracts man away from their Creator! So let me love and die in while in Thy Mercy and forgiveness!

